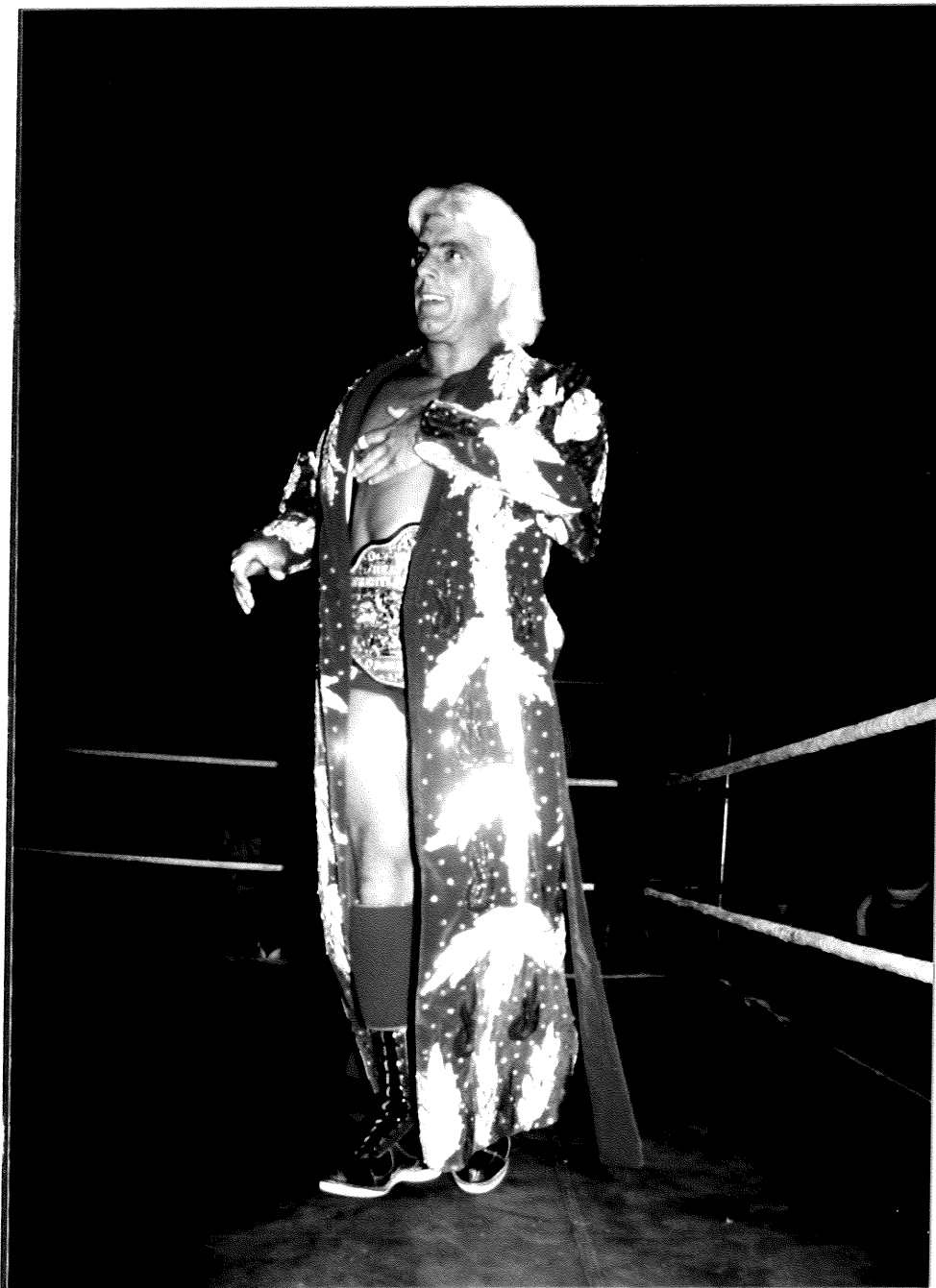


PRO
WRESTLING
TORCH

EDITOR: WADE KELLER



"NATURE BOY" RIC FLAIR

YEARBOOK
1989

PRO WRESTLING TORCH

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INTRODUCTION

—BY WADE KELLER—

Welcome to the Pro Wrestling Torch YEARBOOK 1989! I have been publishing The Torch since October of 1987, over two years now. It has grown from a small newsletter read in a few cities to a publication read in over five countries with a staff of writers I believe is second to none.

The success of The Torch would not have been possible without the help of so many great contributors, correspondents, and readers. There are too many to list, but the names to the left under "Contributors" is a very good start. The Torch has published every two weeks without an exception from day one and will continue for a long while. As my enthusiasm grows for putting together The Torch, so does the enthusiasm of the contributors, correspondents, and especially readers. I would like to personally thank everyone for their great support over the past two-plus years!

Over the next year I plan to continue to publish the bi-weekly newsletter, plus put together another PWT ANNUAL this summer. I hope to keep reevaluating the layout and content and make sure The Torch is always filled with fresh and unique features.

This is the fourth book I have published and I am very happy with the product. Every TorchStaffer got involved in one way or another to put together a great collection of very diverse articles. Thanks must be extended to everyone who hit deadlines even in the hectic holiday season. Now a summary of what you will find beyond this page.

"Eyewitness 89," the first feature takes a look at some major events that occurred in 1989. That is followed by the "Torch Year-End Awards" which had record participation this year. The voting results of this year and past years is accompanied by reader comments on picks and comics by Bill Kunkel and Ron Trelstad. The top fifteen Torch features as voted by you, the readers, is also listed. I also asked you to send in lists of Unofficial Awards, and you did so in fine fashion.

Following the awards is an interview I have wanted to do for a long time - "Torch Talk with Nick Bockwinkel." The interview speaks for itself, but you will find some intriguing comments. Next comes the TorchReader "Predictions for 1990 and Beyond."

Ray Whebbe enters the scene with a great article titled "Promoting ABC's." In this feature, he discusses what it takes to be a wrestling promoter and speaks of his years of experience.

The long-awaited "Torch DecAwards" follow. A lot of the top ten lists will surprise you while some will be as expected. I was very glad to see the entire decade covered by the readers who voted. I feared the later part of the decade would have much greater weight, but that is not evident. Photos of the winners of many of the twenty categories accompany the lists. A lot of comments by readers are also featured.

After Random Marc fills our minds with more of his unique satire, we move into Bill Kunkel's "Angle Rating System" where he puts the top ten list in the "Wrestler of the Decade" category through the ARS grinder to see how they stack up against each other. Mr. Mike enters the scene with drawings of the top finishers in "Wrestler of the Decade" and comments on why he agrees or most likely disagrees with their placement in the top ten.

On a recent "Saturday Night At Ringside" Mick Karch featured a Ric Flair interview done in the early eighties by Gene Okerlund on the AWA All-Star Wrestling program. Flair was NWA Champion at the time, and the interview was so interesting to me, I transcribed it for the yearbook.

Mick Karch shows us he has always been as demented as he is now with his "Memories Are Made of This" article. He looks back on his younger days as a fan and his run-ins with various wrestlers.

Jeff Steele enters the scene with his look at the eighties. He discusses the impact this decade has had on pro wrestling and compares it to pro wrestling in the sixties and seventies.

Next comes a full-page of Bill Kunkel's Potshots comics followed by another batch of Mick Karch's viewer mail from his SNR wrestling block in the Twin Cities which he hosts.

Steve Gerber expands beyond his usual great video tape reviews with "The Price for Fame" where he writes about the nightly rituals wrestlers go through on the road along with examples of a recent visit the WWF made to his local arena.

Ray Whebbe closes out the yearbook with a great article looking at what the nineties have in store for wrestling - "Wrestling With the Nineties." Scattered throughout the book are photos I have taken and comics by Bill Kunkel.

I sincerely hope you enjoy this publication. Either way, your feedback is important, not only to me, but to the entire staff who have put in so many hours of effort. Let me know what you liked, what you did not like, what you would have done differently, and what to change for the next book.

If you are not a current subscriber to the newsletter, Pro Wrestling Torch, I urge you to try a sample subscription. Just send five dollars for every four issues you wish to get. Sub info can be found to the left.

For those of you part of the initial mailing of this yearbook, it should get to you during the second week of January. I made deadline, but not without my computer trying to stop me by eating about 15 pages of it at one point which had to be redone. In ten years we may be doing our twelfth PWT YEARBOOK and someone going to high school today could be voted "Wrestler of the Decade." Pro wrestling in the nineties will see continued changes and evolution. I hope you stick with The Torch all the way through the decade, but first, enjoy the forty pages in your hands. Talk to ya' in the next newsletter. ***

BY WADE KELLER

ODD COUPLE

1989 saw Dusty Rhodes appear under an unlikely banner, the WWF banner. He and Vince McMahon agreed to let bygones be bygones after battling each other via promotional wars for years. Dusty donned the polka dot tights in the World Wrestling Federation and McMahon promoted him into a superstar again.

BATTLE OF THE SUPERCARDS: SUPER SUNDAY II

In what is becoming a tradition, April 2, 1989 saw another battle between the WWF and NWA. While the WWF promoted their biggest show of the year, "Wrestlemania V" from Trump Plaza in Atlantic City, NJ, the NWA promoted a free show called "Clash of the Champions VI: Ragin Cajun" at the Superdome in New Orleans, LA. Wrestlemania was a successful show for the WWF, and the NWA drew good cable ratings but drew well under 10,000 in the big dome.

I'M A FUNKER, YOU'RE A FUNKER, WOULDN'T YOU RATHER BE A FUNKER TOO?

Terry Funk hit the National Wrestling Alliance by storm when he attacked Ric Flair at WrestleWar. After feuding with Dusty Rhodes early in the year in Rhodes' short-lived PWF Florida Promotion, he entered the NWA to feud with Ric Flair. The feud lasted from May 7 until November 15 when Terry Funk said "I-quit" in one of the most brutal matches ever. He ended the year as color commentator on World Wide Wrestling, hosted by Christopher Cruise, or as Tuxedo Terry would call him, "The Crispy Cruiser."

DYNAMIC DUDES DEVASTATED TO DELIGHT OF FANS

The most exhilarating moment of the year for many wrestling fans was Jim Cornette's thundering tennis racket blow to Johnny Ace's back. Johnny Ace and Shane Douglas were teamed together early in the year as "The Dynamic Dudes" as the NWA's answer to The Rock & Roll Express and The Rockers. The Dudes, however, never got much of a following. In a match between The Dudes and The Midnight Express, Cornette, who was advising Ace and Douglas while managing The Express, hopped in the ring and hit Ace on the back with his racket. This turned Jim Cornette into a heel - a very popular one.

HOME SWEET (BUT EMPTY) HOME

Dusty Rhodes' short-lived PWF Florida promotion held "The Homecoming" card starring, of course, Dusty Rhodes. The main event was advertised as Dusty Rhodes versus The Big Steelman (now Tugboat Taylor in the WWF), plus Terry Funk versus Dustin Rhodes, Mike Graham versus Al Perez, and The Von Erichs versus The Star Riders. This heavily promoted show did show something. It showed that Dusty Rhodes wasn't a drawing card in Florida anymore as less than 500 fans attended.

AS THE WORLD (CHAMPION) TURNS

For the past few years "Nature Boy" Ric Flair, the NWA World Champion, has done one dastardly deed after another, yet the majority of the time was heavily cheered by fans. Finally, the World Champion turned babyface when he was attacked by Terry Funk at Wrestlewar on May 7. Terry Funk was a ringside judge in case the Flair-Steamboat match went to a sixty minute draw. After Flair pinned Steamboat, he was in the ring being interviewed by Jim Ross. Terry Funk entered the ring to congratulate Flair. The congratulations led to a challenge. When Flair told Funk he would have to earn his title shot, Funk said he didn't really want a title match and offered to shake hands. Flair accepted, but instead of a handshake he was the recipient of a genuine Terry Funk attack. Funk piledrove Flair on a ringside table and stomped him with a chair. Flair threatened retirement from wrestling but returned to fight Funk at the Great American Bash PPV event on July 23. As the year ended Flair is still being cheered as he feuds with the arrogant Lex Luger.

WHO SAID WHO GOT WHAT WHO ASKED FOR?

In an interview in Torch #50, Verne Gagne when asked what he thought of the late Bruiser Brody said, "He probably got what he asked for." Wrestling fans across the country were appalled, not because he ended his sentence with a preposition, but because he said Brody asked to be brutally murdered in a dressing room in Puerto Rico.

BLAME IT ON THE REIGN

As 1989 came to a close, the NWA was not drawing big crowds at arenas across the country. Many blamed the current low drawing power of the NWA on the reign of NWA World Champion. Many within and outside the organization felt Lex Luger had the look of the eighties, enough skill,

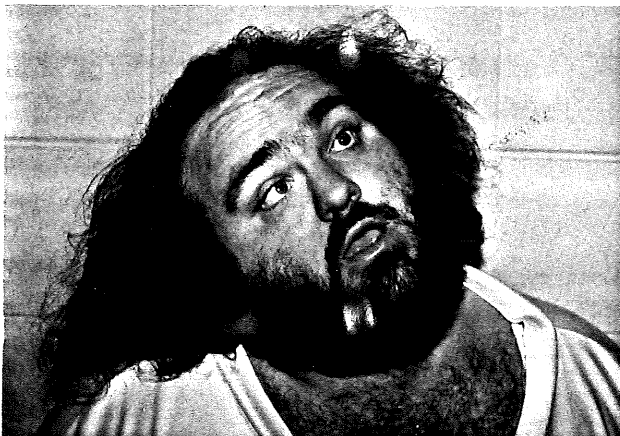
and the charisma to carry the NWA into the next decade. Flair's reign, which began at the original Starrcade in 83 lasted, with a few interruptions, through the end of 1989. Most believe it won't last through 1990.

GORILLA, BOOBSIE, AND HOT ROD

Prime Time Wrestling took on a new look when Bobby Heenan left the seat next to Gorilla Monsoon to host his own half hour show, "The Bobby Heenan Show," following Prime Time Wrestling. The replacement co-host was "Hot Rod" Roddy Piper. When Heenan's show was cancelled only a few weeks later, Heenan returned to the show and co-co-hosted with Piper and Monsoon. This trio entertained viewers until the final show of the year where Roddy attacked Heenan, or as Piper called him, "Boobsie," for making fun of Santa Clause. Piper was fired from the show and the old Gorilla Monsoon-Bobby Heenan duo returned to the set.

BY GEORGE, HE'S NOT IT

Teddy Long made a fast three count on The Road Warriors at Clash V causing them to lose the NWA World Tag Team Titles. This led to Long being fired as a referee. Long returned to the NWA as a manager. He brought with him a new wrestler just released from an insane asylum, Norman the Lunatic. Norman, really Mike Shaw, who previously wrestled as Makhan Singh in Calgary, wrestled as a heel and feuded with Brian Pillman during the summer. Norman, however, was too likable to be a heel, and soon, because of his love for stuffed bears, got into arguments with Teddy Long. Norman was a babyface and began teaming with Steve Williams. Norman got a crush on Woman late in the year and started taking pictures of her at ringside. This gimmick is very similar to that George "The Animal" Steele had in the WWF a few years ago - having a crush on Elizabeth.



GONE WITH THE WINDHAM

Barry Windham is one of those people no one seems to be able to figure out. Not even his brother, Kendall, knows what goes through Barry's mind. In March, Barry Windham was on the missing person's list of the NWA. He was slated to feud with Ric Flair and actually be the catalyst in turning the champ babyface. Windham was apparently out with a hand injury and planned to get surgery. After not getting surgery he and the NWA parted ways and Windham showed up in the WWF as "The Widow Maker." After a few months in the WWF, "The Widow Maker" was on the WWF's missing persons list. He didn't wrestle at the "Survivor Series," although he was advertised as appearing. As 1989 came to a close, Windham was still missing from WWF rings. 1990 should be interesting just trying to keep up with Barry Windham.

NO HEADS BALD

Hulk Hogan starred in a movie titled "No Holds Barred," or as Mr. Mike so cleverly referred to it, "No Heads Balled." The movie was the talk of the WWF TV shows for several months at the beginning of the year. Controversy overflowed on WWF shows as to who the real star of the movie was, Hulk Hogan or Zeus. Few fans cared, but those who did care thought the best wrestler/actor was Stan Hansen who made a cameo appearance in the movie and stole the show. The controversy led to a match at Summerslam with Hulk Hogan & Brutis Beefcake versus Zeus & Randy Savage. Zeus was pinned by Hogan. Zeus appeared opposite of Hogan at the Survivor Series and was disqualified for choking Hulk. Then Hulk got his revenge in the main event of the pseudo-event "No Holds Barred: The Movie, The Match" when he pinned Zeus, ending Zeus's pseudo-wrestling career - we hope.

THE NIGHT FLAIR, STING, MUTA, AND THE ROADIES GOT PINNED

The undefeated Great Muta, the World Champion Ric Flair, the "I don't do jobs" Sting, and the "We don't do no stinkin' jobs" Road Warriors, were all pinned at Starrcade 89 in the Iron Man and Iron Team competition. Sting and The Road Warriors were able to win their respective divisions even with the black mark on their record. The unique Starrcade event featuring Sting, Flair, Luger, and Muta in round-robin singles competition and The Roadies, Doom, The Steiners, and The Samoans in the tag team competition turned out better than many expected as virtually every match ended in a pinfall.

ZBYSZKO ZAPS ZENK ZOOMING TO ZEE TITLE

February 7 the AWA made its long-awaited return to the St. Paul Civic Center. The main event was a battle royal where the winner was to receive the vacant AWA World Title. The last two men in the ring were Tom Zenk and Larry Zbyszko. Zbyszko was able to duck a flying crossbody block and Zenk flew over the top rope, making Zbyszko the new AWA champ. Zbyszko held the title through all of 1989. The AWA title was vacant because Jerry Lawler was stripped of the belt when he refused to wrestle for Verne Gagne.

PSSST, MAKE IT LOOK GOOD, MAKE IT LOOK GOOD

Elizabeth was on a stretcher in the dressing room after getting clobbered by Randy Savage when he was tossed from the ring at the WWF Main Event special broadcast on NBC in February. After a commercial break the camera brought us into the locker room where if one listened closely, they could hear Hulk weeping at Elizabeth's side and saying "Make it look good, make it look good." Here's a classic case of a person who should take his own advice. Hulk didn't make it look good and his acting was lambasted by critics and fans everywhere.

JETSON... I MEAN PAUL E.... YOOOOOOUUUU'RE FIRED!

In one of the biggest stories of the year, Paul E. Dangerously was fired by the NWA after an argument with booker Ric Flair in the dressing room. Neither man was getting along well with each other. The tension between the two came to a head after Paul E.'s final "Danger Zone" segment in September. Flair was angry that Dangerously didn't say "scouting," as Dangerously only alluded to the word. Probably not reason for firing someone under normal circumstances, but in this case, it was the straw that broke the camel's back. Dangerously finished 1989 by booking the ICW territory in Maine, acquiring the rights to the defunct CWF television slots, and planning to produce an alliance of independents across the country.



WAIT A SECOND, I'LL HANDLE THIS, MIKE

Wayne Bloom and Mike Enos formed a team called The Destruction Crew early in the year. One factor in The Crew getting over with the fans was their unique style of interviews. Anytime Mike Enos talked, Wayne Bloom interrupted and said, "Wait a second, I'll handle this one, Mike." Nobody is sure why Wayne does that, why Mike puts up with it, and what the effect is supposed to be, but in any case, it is fun to see week after week. Someday maybe we will understand its meaning. In the meantime, The Destruction Crew continue to defend their AWA World Tag Team Titles.

TAKE THIS JOB AND SHOVE IT WE AIN'T WRESTLIN' HERE NO MORE

Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson, collectively known as The Brain Busters, shocked the wrestling world by quitting the WWF. Very few wrestlers outright quit the WWF with intentions of going to the NWA. Tully and Arn did so. Their example does not encourage others to follow. They were tag team champions at the time they gave notice, but by the time they left the Fed, they lost on National TV twice to two different teams, were called "the worst team I've ever managed" by Bobby Heenan, and fired by Heenan. Tully Blanchard was fired for failing a drug test, while Arn finished his contract by doing a job to The Ultimate

Warrior at The Survivor Series. Instead of jumping from the WWF to the NWA, it appears to the casual observer they were kicked out of the WWF. Arn Anderson showed up in the NWA in December, while Tully Blanchard was unable to sign with the NWA and decided to work for Coca-Cola.



DING DONG, THE GIMMICK IS DEAD

The Ding Dongs was one of those gimmicks that got over like a lead balloon. They debuted in orange outfits with bells around their wrists and ankles, and a bell at ringside. The fans didn't take to them, kids were either scared of them or thought they were stupid, and their wrestling ability wasn't enough compensation. Jim Herd's pet idea flopped and the Ding Dongs were unmasked. They jobbed for the rest of the year.

BATTLING BULLDOGS FROM BRITAIN BREAK-UP

Davey Boy Smith and Dynamite Kid, The British Bulldogs, after leaving the WWF, moved to Calgary. There they actually broke up and wrestled each other over the North American Title. They ended up teaming throughout the year in Japan, while Davey Boy lost the North American Championship to Larry Cameron.

VICIOUS AND DANGEROUS

Not only does that describe them, but that is their name. The Skyscrapers, Dangerous Dan Spivey and Sid Vicious, teamed up under the management of Teddy Long in the NWA. They were the first team to seem like a threat to The Road Warriors. They feuded throughout the year with The Steiners and The Road Warriors. Due to an injury suffered by Sid Vicious, they missed the final month of 1989. 1990 should be The Skyscrapers' year.

IT'S A TAKE-DOWN-THE-BANNER YEAR FOR WORLD CLASS

Eric Embry defeated P.Y. Chu Hi in a cage match (isn't it sort of dumb to say "steel cage." I mean, how many people out there, when they hear the "cage match", think of a ring surrounded by plastic, brick, or wood?). This victory marked the end of World Class and the beginning of the USWA. The story goes like this, the bad guys wanted to buy World Class, while the good guys from the USWA, whoever they were, also wanted to buy World Class, that great territory in Texas. The bidding skyrocketed so high that the two sides agreed to let the decision be made in a wrestling match. The bad guys picked Phil Hickerson, wrestling as an oriental named P.Y. Chu Hi, and the good guys picked Eric Embry to represent them. Embry won, and World Class changed its tarnished name to USWA, the United States Wrestling Association. The World Class banner came down, and a new, but very similar, era began in Texas.

EMBRY EPIDEMIC

Speaking of Embry, he became booker of World Class and the fans were the victim. Except for the inhabitants of the Sportatorium, there were few fans who really liked Eric. He booked himself into every run-in, every controversy, and every match he could. He was beat up by heels at the beginning of virtually every show and he made a superman comeback by the end of virtually every show. It got rather sickening for television viewers. Thankfully, he stepped down as booker late in 1989. Now fans have to put up with Robert Fuller in 1990.

HIGH FLYER LANDS AFTER CRASH

Greg Gagne retired from pro wrestling in 1989. He was teaming with Paul Diamond in the finals of the AWA Tag Team Title Tournament when Sheik Adnan El Kaissie and Kokina Maximus came to ringside. Greg was attacked. The Sheik held Greg down as Kokina flew into the air and crashed on his legs and ribs. Greg Gagne, formerly one-half of the High Flyers with Jim Brunzell, landed in 1989 in the color commentator position for the AWA syndicated shows teaming with host, Ralph Stranqis.

(EYEWITNESS 89 continued on page 15)

1989 TORCH YEAR-END AWARDS

BY WADE KELLER

1989 has come and gone and the TORCH YEAR-END AWARDS recognize the best of this year in twenty-six categories. The awards are based on over eighty-ballots sent by TorchReaders. First place votes received ten points, second place votes received five, and third place votes received three. I extend a big thank you to everyone who took time to fill out the ballot and send in your picks.

Lists of past winners of Torch Mid-Year and Torch Year-End balloting are listed at the beginning of each category followed by the current list of winners. Following that are reader comments. In the Wrestler of the Year category the top three vote-getters are analyzed.

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) Randy Savage; 2) Ric Flair; 3) Ted DiBiase; 4) Owen Hart.

1988 YEAR-END: 1) Ric Flair; 2) Ted DiBiase; 3) Randy Savage; 4) Owen Hart.

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Ric Flair; 2) Ricky Steamboat; 3) Randy Savage; 4) Lex Luger.

1989 YEAR-END:

1) **RIC FLAIR** (624 points): This year was arguably the best of Ric Flair's career. In December of 1988 he was feuding with Lex Luger. In February, Ricky Steamboat returned to the NWA and quickly began a classic feud with Flair. Flair lost the NWA World Title to Steamboat at the Chi-Town Rumble pay-per-view event. He regained the title from Steamboat at Wrestlewar.

After regaining the title, ringside judge Terry Funk brutally attacked Flair. Flair "contemplated retirement" due to severe neck injuries and actually didn't defend the title for over a month. Flair returned and fought Terry Funk at the next pay-per-view, The Great American Bash from Baltimore. This feud carried through until Clash of the Champions IX in November where he defeated Terry Funk in an "I-quit" match.

From there he moved on to title defenses against The Great Muta. As he entered December he was about to begin a series of title defenses against Lex Luger.

Ric Flair was the centerpiece of the NWA in 1989. He wrestled as well as he had anytime in his career. At age forty many are questioning whether he can make it as the number one man in the NWA into the nineties. Regardless, 1989 will be looked at fondly by Ric Flair fans.

2) **TERRY FUNK** (222 points): Terry Funk came out of nowhere this year and made a huge impact in pro wrestling. Early in the year he was feuding with Dusty Rhodes in Rhodes' young and fledgling Pro Wrestling Federation in Florida.

His days in the NWA began at the Clash of the Champions VI live TBS special from the Louisiana Superdome. Terry Funk was part of the ringside group of former NWA World Champions. He also did color commentary with Jim Ross during the Ric Flair-Ricky Steamboat classic two-out-of-three falls match. At Wrestlewar he was brought back as a judge in case the Flair-Steamboat match went to a draw.

Flair pinned Steamboat, and after the match Funk entered the ring and challenged Flair to a title shot. Flair told him he wasn't part of the top ten and would have to earn title shot. Funk, insulted, attacked Flair and piledrove him on a ringside table.

While Flair was out with an injury, Funk moved up the top ten fighting Rick Steamboat and others until he reached number one. He was pinned by Ric Flair at the Great American Bash. After several more months of feuding with Flair at house shows, the feud came to an end when he lost an "I-quit" match to Flair. After the bout he shook Flair's hand and told Flair he was a hell of a man.

Terry Funk retired from active competition and closed the year as a color commentator along side Christopher Cruise on World Wide Wrestling while also gaining power behind the scenes.

1989 was Terry Funk's best year recently and possibly the best of his entire career. His body took brutal beatings, yet he continuously had fabulous matches. His color commentary is top notch and he will probably be part of the NWA throughout 1990.

3) **LEX LUGER** (117 points): Lex Luger began the voting period by getting pinned by Ric Flair at Starrcade 88 in a

very good match. He was a babyface as he entered 1989 and feuded with former Twin Tower partner, Barry Windham over the US Heavyweight Title. At Chi-Town Rumble, Luger pinned Windham to become the US Champion.

He moved to a feud with Michael Hayes who at the time was a babyface. He lost and later regained the US Title from Hayes. He turned heel by attacking Ricky Steamboat at Clash VII on June 10. He moved into a feud with Steamboat which produced some super matches. These matches established Luger as a very good worker.

When Steamboat left the NWA over contract problems, Luger feuded with Tommy Rich. While most of the matches were better than expected, the fans weren't interested in Rich and didn't buy him as a top contender.

Flyin' Brian Pillman came to the NWA and Luger feuded with him next, retaining his US Title. In November he had some matches against Sting and he entered December he was beginning a feud with Ric Flair for the NWA World Title. Most expect Luger will be NWA World Champion by mid-year.

4-10) Hulk Hogan; Rick Steamboat; Randy Savage; Mr. Perfect; Curt Hennig; Sting; The Ultimate Warrior; The Great Muta.

READER COMMENTS:

PETER SCHRODER: The NWA should put a statue of Terry Funk at every arena they visit. It will probably have a better workrate than most WWF "stars."

RHONDA CLARK: He has certainly proven to the fans that he is "the man" and always on top of his game. He is the most respected champion in the history of wrestling.

TIM D'ALLAIRD: I don't think you can consider anyone else for number one other than Ric Flair. He followed up an excellent series with Steamboat with an awesome feud with Terry Funk.

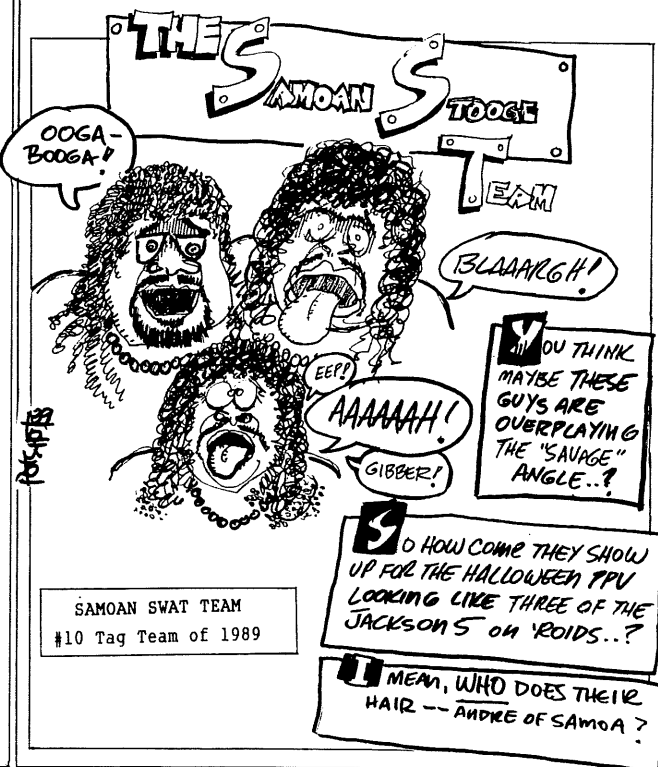
STEVE SIMS: I thought Steamboat was the actual best wrestler I saw this year. In fact, his work this year was the highest quality of any year I have ever seen. Savage carried the WWF for most of the year. Flair had a great year, but not quite at the level of the other two, in my opinion.

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) The Fantastics; 2) The Midnight Express; 3) Blanchard & Anderson; 4) Badd Company (Diamond & Tanaka).

1988 YEAR-END: 1) The Midnight Express; 2) The Fantastics; 3) The Road Warriors; 4) The Brainbusters.

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) The Road Warrior; 2) The Brainbusters; 3) The Rockers; 4) The Twin Towers.



SAMOAN SWAT TEAM
#10 Tag Team of 1989

DO HOW COME THEY SHOW UP FOR THE HALLOWEEN TPV LOOKING LIKE THREE OF THE JACKSON 5 ON 'ROIDS...?

MEAN, WHO DOES THEIR HAIR -- ANDRE OF SAMOA?

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) THE BRAINBUSTERS	303
2) THE ROCKERS	300
3) THE STEINERS	279
4) THE ROAD WARRIORS	187
5-10) The Midnight Express; Demolition; The Skyscrapers; The Freebirds; Destruction Crew; The Samoan Swat Team.	

READER COMMENTS:

TIM D'ALLAIRD: This one is a hard choice. The Midnights had an up and down year politically, but they seem to be back stronger than ever. The Steiner Brothers were not together the whole year, but they are a hot act and deserve some recognition. I have to bring The Road Warriors in at number three for a great feud with The SST and the simple fact that they are my personal favorites.

RHONDA CLARK: The Rockers. In the past eighteen months, they have shown that they are one of the best. They give their best every night. They are a success in the business.

STEVE SIMS: Sean Michaels has the most potential of anyone in the business. He makes Janetty look average when he isn't. Tully and Arn were fabulous the entire year. The Steiners are the team of the future.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR:	1) Ricky Rice; 2) Derrick Dukes; 3) Max Pain; 4) Scott Steiner.
1988 YEAR-END:	1) Scott Steiner; 2) Ricky Rice; 3) Derrick Dukes; 4) Todd Morton
1989 MID-YEAR:	1) Tommy Jammer; 2) Wayne Bloom; 3) Larry Cameron; 4) Lee Scott.

1989 YEAR-END: POINTS

1) WAYNE "THE TRAIN" BLOOM	286
2) DUSTIN "THE NATURAL" RHODES	161
3) "LETHAL" LARRY CAMERON	103
4) "MEAN" MIKE ENOS	97
5-10) Lee Scott; Teddy Long; Tommy Jammer; Scott Norton; Jeff Warner; The Trooper.	

READER COMMENTS:

STEVE SIMS: Wayne Bloom will be even better next year, but he may behind bars for murder if he keeps that off-the-top rope clothesline as a finisher. Dustin is already better than his dad.

RANDY NORDQUIST: A close call between Bloom and Enos. While Bloom looks and talks great, I feel Enos is a more talented worker and does a great job of involving the fans in the action. Both have a great future.

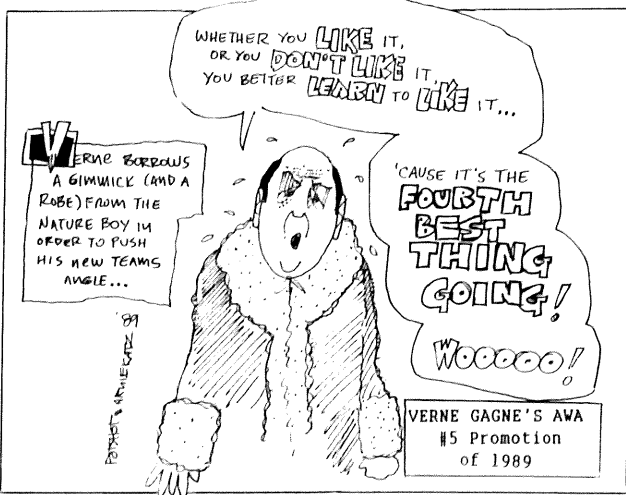
RHONDA CLARK: Dustin Rhodes. He has proven a lot in he last year. He has great promise and the Rhodes last name could not hurt any.

PROMOTION OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR:	1) WWF; 2) NWA; 3) CWA; 4) CWF.
1988 YEAR-END:	1) WWF; 2) NWA; 3) CWA; 4) CWF.
1989 MID-YEAR:	1) NWA; 2) WWF; 3) PNW; 4) CALGARY.

1989 YEAR-END: POINTS

1) NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE	550
2) WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION	442
3) DON OWEN'S PORTLAND (PNW)	89
4) PRO WRESTLING AMERICA	56
5-10) AWA; CALGARY STAMPEDE; USWA/WCWA; CWA; CWF; ICW.	



JAPAN DIVISION

WRESTLER OF THE YEAR: AKIRA MAEDA

Runners Up: Genichiro Tenryu; Jushin Riger; Riki Choshu; Antonio Inoki; Big Van Vader; Masa Saito.

TAG TEAM OF THE YEAR: THE FOOTLOOSE

Runners Up: Can-Am Express; Gordy/Hansen; Tenryu/Hansen.

FEUD OF THE YEAR: JUMBO TSRUTA VS TENRYU

Runners Up: Jushin Riger vs Naoki Sano; Footloose vs Can-Am Express.

(PETER SCHRODER: The first Jushin Riger versus Naoki Sano match was not a wrestling match, it was an exercise in insanity. They could have been killed a number of times. It is not often you see two men risk their careers for the sake of one feud.)

JAPANESE PROMOTION: UNIVERSAL WRESTLING FEDERATION

Runners Up: All-Japan; New-Japan.

READER COMMENTS:

TIM D'ALLAIRD: I reluctantly have to pick the WWF for first. Even though I don't consider what McMahon promotes as wrestling, he is successful. The NWA is having a hard time, but is surely improving.

WALT MARSHALL: Titan Sports (WWF) is simply the best. Vince doesn't put up with BS and runs it professionally. I also think Vince did an excellent job of hurting The Brain Busters. Hey, I like Tully and Arn, but don't back-stab Vince and quit. I find that low.

RHONDA CLARK: WWF - When they say "World Wrestling Federation" they are not kidding. Everyone knows and connects the names. It has totally expanded into the entire universe and standing in the spotlight is Hogan and McMahon.

MATCH OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR:	1) Ric Flair vs Sting (3/27, Clash I) 2) Fantastics vs Midnight Express (3-27) 3) Fantastics vs Midnight Express (4-26) 4) Randy Savage vs Ted DiBiase (3-12)
1988 YEAR-END:	1) Ric Flair vs Sting (3-27, Clash I) 2) Fantastics vs Midnight Express (3-27) 3) Ric Flair vs Lex Luger (7-10, PPV Bash) 4) Fantastics vs Midnight Express (4-26)
1989 MID-YEAR:	1) Ric Flair vs Rick Steamboat (2-20, PPV) 2) Ric Flair vs Rick Steamboat (5-7, PPV) 3) Ric Flair vs Rick Steamboat (4-2, CVI) 4) Hulk Hogan vs Randy Savage (4-2, WMV)

1989 YEAR-END:

POINTS

1) RIC FLAIR VS RICK STEAMBOAT (2-20, CHI)	328
2) RIC FLAIR VS RICK STEAMBOAT (4-2, CVI)	294
3) RIC FLAIR VS RICK STEAMBOAT (5-7, WAR)	292
4) RIC FLAIR VS TERRY FUNK (11-15, CIX)	186
5-10) Ric Flair vs Terry Funk (7-23, Bash); Luger-Steamboat (7-23, Bash); Brain Busters vs Rockers (SNME); Hulk Hogan vs Randy Savage (4-2, WMV); Ultimate Warrior vs Rick Rude (8-28, SS); War Games (7-23, Bash).	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: Flair vs Steamboat from Wrestlewar. I chose this one because I was there live and the action was hot and every move was brilliant. Two of the best.

WALT MARSHALL: Rick Rude versus The Ultimate Warrior at Summerslam. Simply the best match of their career. I was surprised to see the Warrior last so long.

MANAGER OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR:	1) Jim Cornette; 2) Paul E. Dangerously; 3) James J. Dillon; 4) Bobby Heenan.
1988 YEAR-END:	1) Jim Cornette; 2) Paul E. Dangerously; 3) Bobby Heenan; 4) Elizabeth.
1989 MID-YEAR:	1) Jim Cornette; 2) Paul E. Dangerously; 3) Bobby Heenan; 4) Scandar Akbar.

1989 YEAR-END:

POINTS

1) JIM CORNETTE	430
2) BOBBY HEENAN	370
3) PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY	215
4) SENSATIONAL SHERRI	99
5-10) Teddy Long; Gary Hart; Elizabeth; Missy Hyatt; Woman; Diamond Dallas Page.	

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY NORDQUIST: 1989 was the year of many highpoints, but nothing topped Cornette's tennis racket across Shane Douglas' back at Clash IX.

UNOFFICIAL

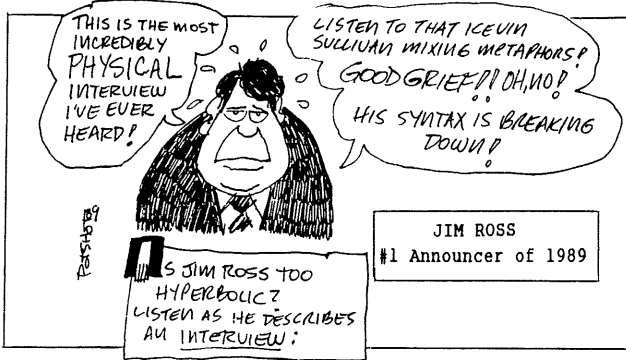
The following is the second annual batch of Torch Readers' "Unofficial Awards." Several readers have sent in a list of awards they feel should have been on the regular ballot and their choice for first place. Notice how many "Unofficial Awards" on one list are very similar to one or two others other lists.

STEPHEN CARUSO: Humanitarian of the Year: Ted Turner, for hiring Junkyard Dog, Jimmy Garvin, Tommy Rich, Buzz Sawyer, Norman the Lunatic, Tom Zenk, Ranger Ross, Bob Orton, The Ding Dongs, Abdullah the Butcher, Bill Irwin, The Iron Sheik, and Kendo Nagasaki (Dragon Master). Only a true humanitarian would hire these bums.
Fraud of the Year: Zeus.
Wrestler of the 1990's: Sid Vicious.
Feud of the 1990's: Sid Vicious versus Lex Luger.
Worst Angle: The USWA angle where there was a "bidding war" for control of the promotion between Eric Embry's group and Scandar Akbar's group. Embry defeated P.Y. Chu Hi for control of the promotion. Did a trained monkey think of this idea?
Worst Impersonation of an Oriental: P.Y. Chu Hi.
Egomania of the Year: Embry, for shamelessly pushing himself instead of the Von Erichs.
Worst Tag Team of All-Time: The Ding Dongs.
Non-Profit Organization of the Year: The AWA.
Quote of the Year: Jesse Ventura to Vince McMahon: "McMahon, sometimes I wonder why I put up with you."
Worst Heel: Rick "The Model" Martel.
Worst Feud: Bob Orton versus Dick Murdoch.
Best New Announcer: Chris Cruise.
Next NWA Champ: Lex Luger.
Convict of the Year: Jake Roberts.
Worst Title Match in History: Hulk Hogan versus The Genius on Saturday Nights Main Event.

ELYSE ZOIS: Worst Impression of a Wrestler: Zeus.
Most Commercials: TBS Megacards.
Most Attractive Couple: Mr. Perfect and The Genius.
Hardest Show to Find on TV: AWA on ESPN.
Guess What Time We're on This Week: NWA Power Hour.
Most Soporific Announcer: Gordon Solie.
George The Animal Wanna Be: Norman the Lunatic.
Best Actor in a Wrestling Movie: Stan Hansen.
Worst Kept Secret: The Identity of Doom.
Most Showboating by a Referee: Tommy Young.
Best Hair: Lex Luger.
Sore Loser Award: Andre the Giant.
Adrian Street School of Beauty Award: Scary Queen Sherri.
Most Invisible Manager: Elizabeth.
Worst Hairdo: Terry "The Red Rooster" Taylor.
Take This Job and Shove It Award: The Brainbusters.
He Can't Wrestle But He Sings Like A Bird: Koko B. Ware.
Worst Wrestling Attire: Dusty Rhodes.
Best Time To Check the Laundry: Brother Love Segment.

ANNOUNCER OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR (Color Commentators Included): 1) Jesse Ventura; 2) Jim Ross; 3) Tony Shrivane; 4) Lance Russell.
1988 YEAR-END: 1) Jim Ross; 2) Jesse Ventura; 3) Lance Russell; 4) Tony Shrivane.
1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Jim Ross; 2) Lance Russell; 3) Tony Shrivane; 4) Vince McMahon.



Most Useless Turns by a Wrestler: Steve Williams.
Literally Hanging From the Rafter's Award: Gorilla Monsoon.
Come Back, Nikolai, I Can't Sing This Alone Award: Boris Zhukov.

TIM NOEL: Best New Announcer: Chris Cruise.
Worst Cable Network With Regard to Wrestling: ESPN.
Most Popular Heel Turn of the Year: Cornette and Midnighters.
Man Most Likely To Appear on Clash of the Champions Under a Mask: Jack Victory.
Here Today, Gone Tomorrow: Dick Slater.
Most Frequently Humiliated of the Year: "Brother Love" Bruce Pritchard.
Invisible Manager of the Year: Mr. Fuji.
Arena Most Likely to Leak a Rainstorm: Richmond Coliseum.
Unanswered Question of the Decade: What is that huge spot on Dusty's gut?

GARY COLLINS: Top Ten Reasons The World Class/USWA Syndicated Show Was the Worst Show of the Year, If Not of All-Time:

- 1) Eric Embry as lead babyface.
- 2) Percy Pringle as a babyface manager.
- 3) Not one wrestler or manager could do a decent interview (excluding the occasional appearance of Jerry Lawler).
- 4) Frank Dusek as a color-commentator.
- 5) Marc Lowrance as an announcer.
- 6) The worn-out Scandar Akbar as a heel manager.
- 7) Not one good wrestling match.
- 8) The continual beating and blinding of Eric Embry, always followed by his (and our) quivering and retching.
- 9) The tawdry angles involving Toni Adams.
- 10) Stupid ringside fans who cheer this garbage.

Ten NWA/WWF Trades I'd Make:

- 1) Freebirds for Rougeaus.
- 2) Skyscrapers for Rockers.
- 3) Lex Luger for Ted DiBiase.
- 4) Butch Reed for Tim Horner.
- 5) Samoan Swat Team for Rick Martel & Tito Santana.
- 6) Sting for Barry Windham.
- 7) Road Warriors for Bret Hart & Terry Taylor.
- 8) Gary Hart/Rip Morgan/Johnny Ace/Tommy Young/Ding Dongs/Dragon Master/Samoan Savage for Curt Hennig.
- 9) Ranger Ross for Barry Horowitz.
- 10) Kevin Sullivan/Woman/Nitron/Joe Pedicino/Iron Sheik/five jobbers (excluding Lee Scott)/El Gigante for Randy Savage & Sherri Martel.

Wrestler I Hope Succeeds Without Being Stereotyped: Charlie Norris.

Bad Dream Revisited: The Return of Bob Montana as an AWA announcer.

Best Columnists: Mr. Mike and Bill Kunkel.

Next To Vince McMahon, the Most Influential Person in

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) JIM ROSS	635
2) TONY SHIIVONE	226
3) LANCE RUSSELL	116
4) VINCE MCMAHON	99
5-10) Chris Cruise; Gordon Solie; Gorilla Monsoon; Lee Marshall; Bob Caudle; Don Coss.	

READER COMMENTS

WALT MARSHALL: Jim Ross gets second behind Tony Shrivane. Tony is not really at the level Jim Ross, but give him time. I put him first because I enjoy Tony more than Ross. McMahon is underrated and I put him third.

RANDY NORDQUIST: The great announcers are those who make wrestling interesting even when the talent they are working with is totally green. Like Lance Russell, Mick Karch was able to bring out the best in the talent he worked with. Most importantly, he did it without talking down to the fans. He has made a real contribution.

PETER SCHRODER: Sure, Jim Ross is incredible, but Lance Russell has such integrity that he gets my vote in perpetuity. Plus he has such a great laugh.

RHONDA CLARK: Jim Ross - His wit and wisdom has put him over with me. There is no one like him. He is definitely one of the greats.

COLOR COMMENTATOR OF THE YEAR

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Jesse Ventura; 2) Michael Hayes; 3) Bobby Heenan; 4) Johnny V.

TORCH AWARDS

By the Readers

Wrestling in the Eighties: Dusty Rhodes.
The Only Reason to Sit Through the Local Showing of USWA Wrestling: Mick Karch's Video Vault.
Steroid Wrestler Worse Than The Ultimate Warrior: Sid Vicious.
Wrestling Maneuver I Am Sick of Seeing: The Clothesline.
Finish to a Wrestling Match I Am Sick of Seeing: Run-ins.
Overstayed Their Welcome?: The Road Warriors.
TV Wrestling Show I Would Most Like To See: A program Showing Tapes of Matches from the Sixties and Seventies.
Looked Better When She Was Robin Green: Woman (W.K.-Who else was Robin Green this year, Gary? By the way, is it just me who took so long to realize the significance of that name "Robin Green" besides some supposed inside stuff - it sounds like "Robbing Green" meaning stealing Rick Steiner's money. Back to Awards...)
Haven't We Seen You Before: Dustin Rhodes.
Makes the Best out of a Bad Interview: Mick Karch.
Funniest AWA Interview: Ricky Rice and Derrick Dukes imitating The Sheiks.
Forgot Their Is More To Wrestling Than Doing Interviews: Larry Zbyszko and Roddy Piper.
Best Playboy's Women of Wrestling Picture: Magnificent Mimi.
Youngest Dirty Old Man: Mick Karch.
Foot-Free and Screw-Loose: Kerry Von Erich.
Straight Shooter: Eddie Sharkey.
Best Local Wrestling Radio Guest: Tom "Beef" Burton.
Must Be Blackmailing Someone in the NWA Front Office: Gary Hart.
Slobber-Box: Zeus

EVAN GINZBURG: "If This Were The Stone Age, He Would Be A Looker" Award: Steve Williams.
"Squarest Head In The Business" Award: Sid Vicious.
"Wouldn't Want To Bump Into These Guys In A Dark Alley" Award: Doom.
"Makes A Lot Of Noise But Doesn't Do Much" Award: Jimmy Garvin.
"George Steele did That Act Better Twenty Years Ago" Award: Norman the Lunatic.
"I Cry Myself To Sleep, I Miss Them So Much" Award: The Ding Dongs.
"They Could Do Stand-Up" Awards: Terry Funk and Jim Cornette.
"Most Sadly Appropriate Name For A Wrestler" Award: The Z-Man.
"If He Were Only 6'10" and 300 Pounds He Would Get More Respect From The Morons" Award: Ric Flair
"They May Be Burying Him Again, But At Least He Gets To Go Home To Missy" Award: Eddie Gilbert.

STEVE GENNARELLI: The No Mas Award: To ESPN from an economical standpoint. I know why "Legends of World Class" airs each day. It is paid programming running in

time slot (4:00 PM) that means little to ESPN. But as a fan, this show should be terminated. There are many companies selling hours of classic wrestling (e.g. Bruisers old WWA). If contacted, Verve could put together a few nostalgia show (Hogan, Heenan, Bockwinkel, and all the rest). Then again, this is ESPN and wrestling has always been a burden to them. In other words, enjoy watching Al Madril, The RPM's, Rip Oliver, and other assorted legends.

Blown Opportunity Awards: This summer MTV gave away a replica Batmobile from "Batman." VH-1 recently gave away The Corvette Collection. The Weather Channel or FNN/Score could have gotten great publicity by giving away the Limousine from "No Holds Barred." Although the film was universally panned, the scene in which Hulk (Rip) springs himself through the roof of the limo is nothing short of modern day special effects miracle.

What's In A Name Award: If I could make a change in the NWA it might be in the name department. Brian Pillman, Tom Zenk, and Shane Douglas are all sharp sounding, memorable names. Leave the silly monikers (Flyin' Brian, Z-Man, Dynamic Dudes) to the WWF. As your average 25 year old male, I'd boo the hell out of Flyin' Brian, but Brian Pillman I would respect a whole lot more.

"You Insult Our Intelligence, Too" Award: For Bill Apter and company. Pick up any Apter mag (Pro Wrestling Illustrated, The Wrestlers, et al) and you will read about "Vince Insulting Our Intelligence." That is fine; McMahon deserves all the bad press he gets. What is sad is that alongside the occasional nice item (eg: acknowledging Dave Meltzer) you have an embarrassing fictitious article. A state of the game roundtable discussion has Bruno still harping about Zbyszko, Magnum hoping rulebreakers are a thing of the past, etc. Since Craig Peters, Eddie Elner, and the rest are really people, why don't they interview the wrestlers. Would that be expecting too much? I guess it's best to stick to the sheets (Observer, Torch, Matwatch).

Parts Unknown Award: An award for the person who conceived The Ding Dongs. In retrospect, this gimmick perfectly demonstrates a main difference between Titan and the NWA. Had The Ding Dongs been Vince's gem, we would've seen countless Ding Dong videos. We would know whether to cheer or boo them. In fact, Vince did do a variation on this with The Machines. The NWA just dropped this act into a "Clash" and Jim Ross announced dumbfounded not telling the fans much at all. The bottom line is the fact that it would fail with a big build-up, just as it did without one.

Best Dumb Concept of the Year Award: The AWA Team Challenge. Vince is doing this in 90', but he is doing it geographically. Team West has Hogan, Beefcake, and Piper, among others. Team East has Bad News Brown and The Young Geldings. Team Un-America has Andre, Bravo, and Snuka, among others. Team Parts Unknown has Ultimate Warrior & those ever present wild card picks. Forgive me, I'm on medication (W.K. Forgiven). ***

ANNOUNCING PAIR OF THE YEAR

NEW CATEGORY

1989 YEAR-END:

	POINTS
1) MCMAHON & VENTURA	325
2) ROSS & CORNETTE	249
3) ROSS & CAUDLE	107
4) ROSS & HAYES	90
5-10) Ross & Solie; Monsoon & Heenan (w/Piper); Ventura & Monsoon; Marshall & Bockwinkel; Ross & Cruise.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: McMahon & Ventura - These two have charisma and chemistry. They work well together with McMahon cheering for the faces and Ventura cutting him down with loads of insults and plenty of laughs.



1989 YEAR-END:

	POINTS
1) JESSE VENTURA	630
2) JIM CORNETTE	241
3) MICHAEL HAYES	129
4) PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY	43
5-10) Bobby Heenan, Terry Funk, Nick Bockwinkel, Scotty the Body, Roddy Piper, Kevin Sullivan.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: Lance Russell is a veteran and knows a great deal about the biz. He is one of the best and paired with anyone, they cannot be beat.

FEUD OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) Savage-DiBiase; 2) Fantastics-Midnights; 3) Flair-Sting; 4) Hennig-Lawler.
1988 YEAR-END: 1) Savage-DiBiase; 2) Fantastics-Midnights; 3) J. Roberts-Rude; 4) Midnights-Original Midnights.
1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Flair-Steamboat; 2) Hogan-Savage; 3) Busters-Rockers; 4) Luger-Hayes.

1989 YEAR-END:

	POINTS
1) RIC FLAIR-TERRY FUNK	504
2) RIC FLAIR-RICK STEAMBOAT	372
3) HULK HOGAN-RANDY SAVAGE	153
4) ROCKERS-BRAIN BUSTERS	66
5-10) Warriors-Scrapers; Sting-Muta; Ultimate-Rude; Rockers-Rougeaus; Piper-Rude w/Heenan; Midnights-Original Midnights.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: What started in Nashville hopefully ended in New York. The matches in between were some of the most hard-fought and skillful matches I have ever witnessed

TOP FIFTEEN TORCH FEATURES

- 1) BILL KUNKEL'S "POTSHOTS" (New)
- 2) THE HOT NEWS by Wade Keller (1)
- 3) TORCH TALK by Wade Keller (New)
- 4) MICK KARCH'S "SUBMISSION" (3)
- 5) NEWS ANALYSIS by Wade Keller (4)
- 6) RANDOM MARC PRESENTS (New)
- 7) MR. MIKE'S MONDO TORCHING (5)
- 8) RAY WHEBBE'S "RING RUMBLINGS" (2)
- 9) TORCH NEWSBREAKERS (6)
- 10) JEFF STEELE'S "STEELE RINGPOST" (New)
- 11) READER RHETORIC (12)
- 12) WADE KELLER'S "IT BEEZ THAT WAYS" (15)
- 13) QUOTEBOOK by The Wrestlers (NR)
- 14) RINGSIDE BEAT by The Readers (8)
- 15) MAJOR EVENT TORCH ANALYSIS by The Staff (New)

[The number next to the column listed indicates the column's placement in last year's balloting. NR indicates it was unrated and "new" means the column first appeared in 1989.]

BEST NEW GIMMICK OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR (ANGLE & PUSH INCLUDED): 1) Windham Turns Heel on Luger; 2) The Twin Referee Angle; 3) Triple Tower of Doom; 4) Hogan Loses Belt/Andre Gives To DiBiase.

1988 YEAR-END: 1) Steiners and The Varsity Club; 2) Hogan Loses Belt Due To Twin Referee Angle; 3) Paul E. and Original Express attack Cornette & Midnights; 4) Road Warriors turn on Sting.

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Terry Funk attacks Ric Flair; 2) Randy Savage turns on Hulk Hogan; 3) The Great Muta; 4) Rick Steiner's Act.

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) DESTRUCTION CREW	94
2) SKYSCRAPERS	93
3) NORMAN THE LUNATIC	92
4) WOMAN AND DOOM	79
5-10) Zeus; Beetlejuice; The Great Muta; Sherri with Savage; Mr. Perfect; Ricky "The Prophet" Rice; The Genius.	

READER COMMENTS:

ELYSE ZOIS: This was a hard category. I thought most of them were awful. The Genius, Woman, and Norman were the best of a bad lot.

RHONDA CLARK: Teddy Long and The Skyscrapers. Long's turn was surprising and The Scrapers are tremendous and they have only just begun.

BEST ANGLE OF THE YEAR

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) FUNK ATTACKS FLAIR AT WRESTLEWAR	391
2) CORNETTE ATTACKS DUES	170
3) ROBIN GREEN/WOMAN TURNS ON STEINERS	130
4) LUGER TURNS ON STEAMBOAT	114
5-10) Savage Turns On Hogan; Flair/Sting-Muta/Slater w/Funk and Plastic Bag; Flair/Windham vs Gilbert/Mystery Partner Steamboat; Rude-Piper Brawl on Brother Love Show; Funk Turning in I-Quit Match; Nord-Piper-Brawl.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: Luger turns heel. What a move for Luger and a good one. He plays the arrogant part perfectly and he continues to impress and improve.

ANGLE OF THE YEAR RUNNER-UP SUPPLIMENT

EXCLUSIVE FICTIONAL EXCERPTS OF TV SHOWS NEVER TO AIR
By The Random Marc

"We are The Midnight Express and we are back, badder, bolder, and more brazen than ever. Now I know a lot of you are saying, 'Hey, Jim. We don't mind that you turned heel again. We don't mind that you are back insulting us week after week. Actually, we kind of like it. But, how can you expect us to believe that in an NWA filled with The Road Warriors, The Skyscrapers, The Steiners, the toughest man in the world - Steve "Dr. Death" Williams, Lex Luger, Sting, The Doom Dongs, and God knows who else, that with this calibre of competition around, that you have altered the course of your lives and pro wrestling history out of fear of Johnny Douglas and Shane Ace or whatever their names are? How can you expect us to buy that, Jim?"

"I know that is what you're saying, those of you who can even speak English. But what you brain-damaged idiots don't understand is that I, Jim Cornette, have said so often before, wrestling fans are the dumbest, ugliest people in the world and I can tell you morons anything because you are all too stupid to tell the difference. You

geeks probably don't even know why Rick Steamboat and Barry Windham left the NWA. They left because they were afraid of having to face George South. But, Beautiful Bobby and Sweet Stan, and myself are not afraid of George South. We're not afraid of The Steiners. We're not afraid of Paul Ellering and his legion of the doomed. And make no mistake about it, The Road Warriors are doomed as soon as we get them in the ring. We're not afraid of anyone except Morton Douglas and Ace Gibson.

"Now I know the Dynamic Dudes have lost to everyone they've ever faces except for The New Zealand Militia. I know that Shane may never again be at full-strength and that Johnny Ace can't wrestle. It doesn't matter. Bring on The Road Warriors. Bring on The Steiners. Bring on Z-Man and Pillman. Bring on Sting and Flair. But first, we are going to have to get part the toughest foes we've ever had to deal with, Ace Douglas and Johnny Shane."

"I'm not sure I can follow Cornette's logic, Jim. But, I'm glad to see him back where he belongs."

"I think you're exactly right on both counts, Bob."

MOST IMPROVED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) Sting; 2) Lex Luger; 3) Bret Hart; 4) Barry Windham.

1988 YEAR-END: 1) Sting; 2) Rick Steiner; 3) Lex Luger; 4) The Blue Blazer.

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Lex Luger; 2) Big Bossman; 3) Sting; 4) Mike Rotunda.

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) LEX LUGER	446
2) SCOTT STEINER	211
3) RICK RUDE	186
4) THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR	44
5-10) Brian Pillman; The Great Muta; Sting; Mr. Perfect Curt Hennig; Big Bossman; Dangerous Dan Spivey.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: Lex Luger - His heel turn, new image and persona has made him into a well-rounded athlete. He is a well-deserving champ.

MOST DEPROVED WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) Nikita Koloff; 2) Bam Bam Bigelow; 3) Dusty Rhodes; Hacksaw Duggan.

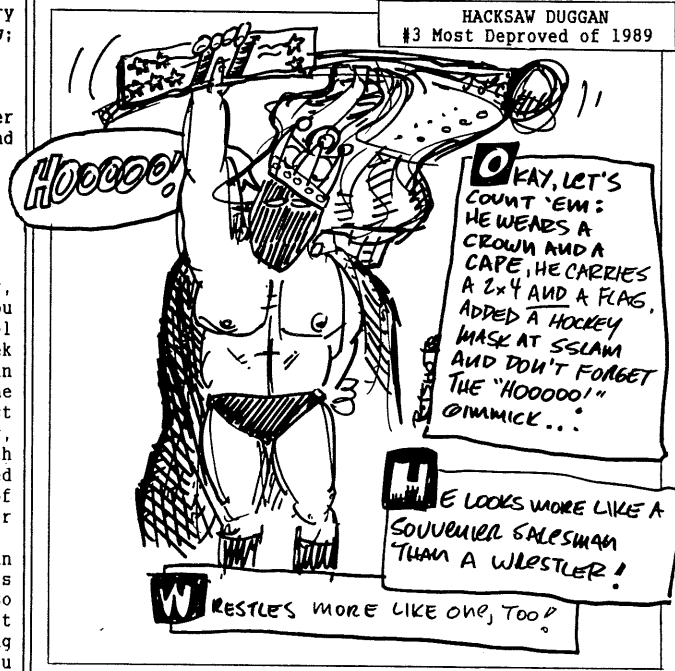
1988 YEAR-END: 1) Dusty Rhodes; 2) Greg Valentine; 3) Ken Patera; 4) Nikita Koloff.

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Red Rooster; 2) The Blue Blazer; 3) Andre the Giant; 4) Honkeytonk Man.

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) THE RED ROOSTER (TERRY TAYLOR)	169
2) DINO BRAVO	135
3) HACKSAW JIM DUGGAN	126
4) THE WIDOW MAKER (BARRY WINDHAM)	64
5-10) Stan Lane; Ultimate Warrior; Dusty Rhodes; Jake Roberts; Tommy Rich; Akeem.	

HACKSAW DUGGAN

#3 Most Deproved of 1989



READER COMMENTS:

ELYSE ZOIS: Andre has to be the most deproved. He now needs a taq team partner to cover up the fact that he really cannot do much anymore.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Tom Zenk has to be the biggest disappointment of the year. Hulk Hogan continued his downhill slide. Have you noticed is starting to look, talk, and work exactly like Sgt. Bob Remus? They could be brothers.

RHONDA CLARK: The Red Rooster - One average wrestler ruined by McMahon and the circus. Reduced to bottom card status. He should get out before it is too late, but it probably already is.

OUTSTANDING WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

NEW CATEGORY

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) RIC FLAIR	495
2) TERRY FUNK	248
3) RICK STEAMBOAT	238
4) THE GREAT MUTA	74
5-10) Lex Luger; Mr. Perfect Curt Hennig; Sting; Scott Steiner; Ted DiBiase; Shawn Michaels.	

READER COMMENTS:

TIM D'ALLAIRD: Terry Funk walks away with this one due to his excellent psychotic work all year long.

ELYSE ZOIS: I included Ricky Steamboat at number two because he was so good while he lasted.

RHONDA CLARK: Sting - He is definitely a future superstar, but has proven that he is a contender for any title. He is certainly a "hot commodity."

BEST WEEKLY TV SHOW OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) NWA Main Event; 2) CWA Championship; 3) WWF Superstars; CWF Wrestling.

1988 YEAR-END: 1) WWF Superstars; 2) NWA World Championship; 3) WWF Saturday Nights Main Event; 4) CWA Championship.

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) NWA World Championship; 2) WWF Superstars; 3) NWA Main Event; 4) Portland.

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) NWA WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING	342
2) NWA POWER HOUR	259
2) WWF SUPERSTARS OF WRESTLING	259
4) NWA MAIN EVENT	109
5-10) WWF Prime Time; NWA World Wide; WWF Wrestling Challenge; Portland; NWA Pro; USWA Challenge/WCWA.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: World Championship Wrestling continued to impress me with great commentators and fantastic match-ups.

RANDY NORDQUIST: The World Class/USWA show deserves mention in third place as one of the most bizarre shows of all time. The demented Marc Lowrance is one of the best ever - completely weird.

BEST MAJOR EVENT OF THE YEAR

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Wrestlewar 89; 2) Chi-Town Rumble 89; 3) Clash of the Champions VI; 4) Starrcade 88.

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) NWA GREAT AMERICAN BASH 89	311
2) NWA WRESTLEWAR 89	276
3) NWA CHI-TOWN RUMBLE 89	155
4) NWA CLASH OF THE CHAMPIONS IX	151
5-10) Wrestlemania V; Summerslam 89; Starrcade 88; Clash of the Champions VI; Halloween Havoc; Survivor Series.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: Wrestlewar: Music City Showdown. This was a big day for the NWA and Nashville. Major things happened that day. It was an exciting day and being there was tremendous.

BEST BABYFACE OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) Randy Savage; 2) Sting; 3) Lex Luger; 4) Hulk Hogan.
 1988 YEAR-END: 1) Sting; 2) Hulk Hogan; 3) Randy Savage; 4) Rick Steiner.
 1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Hulk Hogan; 2) Rick Steamboat; 3) Lex Luger; 4) Sting.

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) HULK HOGAN	489
2) RIC FLAIR	241
3) STING	194
4) ULTIMATE WARRIOR	120
5-10) Rick Steamboat; Rick Steiner; Roddy Piper; Brian Pillman; Scott Steiner; Marty Jannetty.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: Ultimate Warrior is someone who knows how to work a crowd and become the center of attention. Proved to be very marketable for the Whiff.

BEST HEEL OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) Ted DiBiase; 2) Barry Windham; 3) Ric Flair; 4) Terry Taylor.

1988 YEAR-END: 1) Ted DiBiase; 2) Barry Windham; 3) Eddie Gilbert; 4) Ric Flair.

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Randy Savage; 2) Terry Funk; 3) Rick Rude; 4) Michael Hayes.

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) TERRY FUNK	561
2) LEX LUGER	204
3) RANDY SAVAGE	186
4) RICK RUDE	97
5-10) Mr. Perfect Curt Hennig; Randy Savage; Ted DiBiase; Jerry Lawler; Great Muta; Ric Flair; Andre the Giant.	

READER COMMENTS:

RANDY NORDQUIST: Only Bullshit Bob Ryan has more natural heel charisma than "The Total Package."

ELYSE ZOIS: Savage gets my vote as heel of the year as he insults the fans, abuses his manager, and draws fans to the arena to boo him.

RHONDA CLARK: Ted DiBiase. Most wrestling fans will identify with the name and most will explain they dislike him very much. A great wrestler who needs some competition capable of four star matches.

WORST WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

1988 MID-YEAR: 1) Andre the Giant; 2) George Steele; 3) Ultimate Warrior; 4) Dusty Rhodes.

1988 YEAR-END: 1) Andre the Giant; 2) Ultimate Warrior; 3) Junkyard Dog; 4) Dusty Rhodes.

1989 MID-YEAR: 1) Junkyard Dog; 2) Andre the Giant; 3) Ultimate Warrior; 4) Dusty Rhodes.

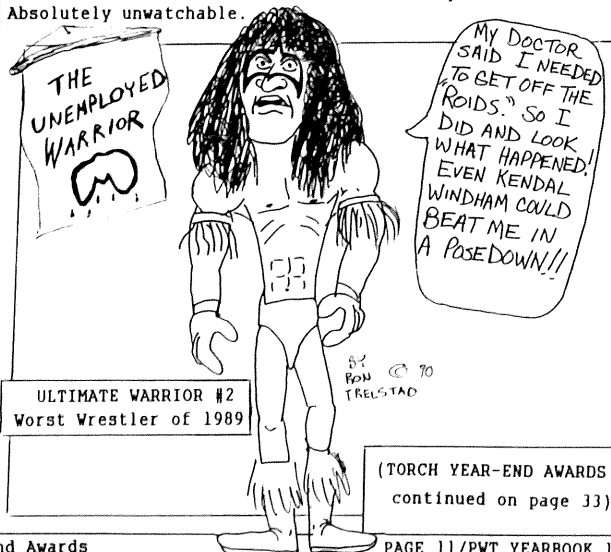
1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) ANDRE THE GIANT	310
2) ULTIMATE WARRIOR	175
3) ZEUS	103
4) HACKSAW JIM DUGGAN	71
5-10) Eric Embry; Dino Bravo; Dusty Rhodes; Hulk Hogan; Junkyard Dog; Akeem.	

READER COMMENTS:

ELYSE ZOIS: The worst wrestler has got to be Zeus. He is so bad we do not even see him in squash matches. He seems as much a threat to Hogan's title as Steve Lombardi

RHONDA CLARK: Greg Valentine was a great wrestler who is now past his prime. He should retire with Andre.

RANDY NORDQUIST: Andre, Warlord, Bravo, Warrior, and dozens more. The WWF product has gotten really awful. The decline of the WWF will be the story of the nineties. Absolutely unwatchable.



TORCH BY WADE KELLER

Nick Bockwinkel *TALK*



NICK BOCKWINKEL AND LEE MARSHALL

Nick Bockwinkel is considered to be one of the all-time greats in pro wrestling. He dominated the AWA in the seventies winning numerous tag team and world titles. His feuds with Verne Gagne and Hulk Hogan are some of the most memorable in wrestling. He finished in the top ten of the "Wrestler of the Eighties" balloting. After retiring in 1987 and moving to administrative work for the World Wrestling Federation, he is now color commenting for the AWA on ESPN while also selling insurance. Nick Bockwinkel is a man with a lot of opinions and a lot of memories concerning the sport of pro wrestling, and in this "Torch Talk" with Wade Keller, he reveals many of those.

WADE KELLER: HOW DID YOU ORIGINALLY GET INVOLVED IN PRO WRESTLING?

NICK BOCKWINKEL: My father wrestled. I was going to college on a football scholarship. I had a couple knee operations and was kind of a wounded duck. When you've had two operations on your knee in the first two years, they tend to open your slot for a new freshmen that's healthy. I wrestled for UCLA and then I started wrestling professionally roughly the last few years in college.

KELLER: IS PRO WRESTLING EASIER ON THE KNEES THAN PRO FOOTBALL?

BOCKWINKEL: Not all all. I'd say it's equally as hard.

KELLER: WHAT WAS IT LIKE GROWING UP WATCHING YOUR FATHER, WARREN BOCKWINKEL, WRESTLE?

BOCKWINKEL: It was very good. The only difference between my father and other wrestlers' fathers was that my father was, so to speak, a semi-final, occasionally a main event wrestler, sometimes preliminary status. He was very easy going so he didn't have a lot of drive, but he was very talented. With not having that tremendous desire he still accomplished quite a bit. So I got to study the business and understand the nature of the beast via very middle ground. Not someone like Greg Gagne who could only see it from one end, or possibly Curt Hennig, because his father was quite successful. Or say the Kiniski boys, or the Von Erich boys. When you see it from that perspective you get a singular distortion.

KELLER: WERE YOU TREATED DIFFERENTLY BY PEERS WHILE GROWING UP WHO KNEW YOUR FATHER WAS A WRESTLER?

BOCKWINKEL: A lot of them were admirable. Then there were others who thought they could challenge me since I was a fair sized kid. If they were equal in size or bigger, they thought maybe they could make their mark on the kid if they couldn't on the old man.

KELLER: WHO TRAINED YOU TO BE A PRO WRESTLER?

BOCKWINKEL: I had the opportunity to get in the ring and work out with so many different wrestlers. Wilbur Snyder, Gene Kiniski, Joe Blanchard, Lou Thesz, Hard Boiled Haggerty. So many. A lot of this was when I was fifteen or sixteen years old. I had an awful lot of teachers. I have a moxy so to speak to keep my mouth shut and just listen to them all and try to absorb from each one of them what they had to offer, and consequently there is a tremendous advantage.

KELLER: DO YOU REMEMBER YOUR FIRST MATCH?

BOCKWINKEL: The first match I had was when I was fifteen years old and not for money. It was against Sandy Scott who was eighteen year old - an exhibition match for charity. It was three in the afternoon. The temperature

was about 98 degree and the mat was so hot that if you hit it, you came up because it was like hitting pavement on a hot summer day. It was a twenty minute match, and at about the eighteen minute mark, with no sense of timing or pacing, the two of us, with the adrenaline running crazy in our systems, came off the mat to face each other one last time. All of a sudden I looked at him and, boom, he just fell backwards. He passed out from heat stroke and I covered him one-two-three. Then I didn't see the man until twenty-seven years later.

KELLER: HOW MANY YEARS DID YOU END UP WRESTLING PROFESSIONALLY?

BOCKWINKEL: I think it was thirty-one, thirty-two.

KELLER: IN ALL THAT TIME WHAT WAS YOUR MOST MEMORABLE MATCH?

BOCKWINKEL: Oh boy, it's hard to say. Possibly either the match with Hulk Hogan in April of 83 in St. Paul or Verne Gagne's retirement match. Both of those were very memorable. People talk about hype - there's really no difference between hype and advertising - but I think there was so much hype or advertising because there was a very strong product they were trying to move. Being that we were the product and I was one of the parts of the product and you get there and you've got 22,000 people and everybody is up and they've been brought very close to their nerve endings and you're a part of that, I don't care how many times you stepped into that ring, the adrenaline runs right through your whole system.

KELLER: IN ALL OF YOUR YEARS WRESTLING WHAT IS YOUR PROUDEST ACHIEVEMENT?

BOCKWINKEL: I think the consistency of the last fifteen years of my career, upholding both the three or four times tag team championship and then afterwards four times holding the AWA singles championship. What is proud there is that anybody can rise to the top for a quick momentary occasion, but when you can stay there for fifteen years at the very top, that just spells out a lot.

KELLER: DO YOU HAVE ANY REGRETS?

BOCKWINKEL: No. Though I possibly wish, if anything, I may have been ten years slower or later on my schedule so that I could have really reached some of the mass benefits that some of the guys who are wrestling on top today are. Because I'm sure that had my peak not been reached when it had, and my age factor and all that, I'm sure I would have been part of the massive scene that is taking place today.

KELLER: HOW DID YOU LIKE TOURING JAPAN COMPARED TO THE UNITED STATES?

BOCKWINKEL: I liked it very much. It was good money. They treated you very graciously and with the respect that a World Champion deserves.

KELLER: HOW DO YOU LOOK AT YOUR YEARS WORKING FOR VERNE GAGNE?

BOCKWINKEL: Fortunately for myself, by the time he was on the promotional end of the thing, he and I had slapped each other on the side of the head enough times before his retirement and before he became the promotional figure that he did that he definitely had a strong professional respect for me and likewise I had my respect for him. So I never found it a problem. At that point he knew what kind of a competitor I was. He knew that I was a very first class individual and I think he had accepted that fact and treated it as such.

KELLER: DID YOU SEE INSTANCES WHERE VERNE GAGNE AS A PROMOTER TREATED PEOPLE UNFAIRLY?

BOCKWINKEL: Sure. I thought that was foolish on his part, but then people that are in powerful positions where they are in control do it all the time. Sometimes they don't think it's the wrong thing they're doing at the time or they think they have the pre-emptive right to do it. When they do, it's between the individual being treated that way and the person who's treating him. So long as it didn't touch me, I didn't stick my nose into it.

KELLER: WHY DID YOU STOP WRESTLING A COUPLE YEARS AGO?

BOCKWINKEL: The time had come. I had put in enough years. My family, for the last five years of my career, had been really anxious for me to step out of the ring, constantly worried that any one of those nights I could have gotten injured badly, which is there any night any wrestler steps into the ring.

KELLER: WHEN YOU BEGAN WORKING FOR THE WWF WOULD YOU HAVE LIKED TO TAKE A MORE ACTIVE ROLE AS A COLOR COMMENTATOR, REFEREE, OR WRESTLER?

BOCKWINKEL: I think that I would have enjoyed very much matching my competitive skills one more time. I can say that had Vince McMahon given me that opportunity, I probably would have tried. But at the same time, you know the fact that he wanted my brain power more than he did my physical talents, that's very acceptable to me. I mean

let's not kid each other, I'm not a kid. At the end of my career I was not a kid even though I did do an excellent bang-up job. My point is simple, that he is looking not at what is good today, but what is good today and tomorrow and three or five years down the line. Understandable.

So I worked strictly in an administrative capacity as far as handling talent, buildings, personal relations, public relations. It was a very first class organization.

KELLER: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT THE VARIETY OF WAYS WRESTLING IS COVERED, INCLUDING BILL APTER'S LINE OF MAGAZINES AND THE TORCH AND MELTZER'S OBSERVER?

BOCKWINKEL: I have problems accepting critics (Torch/Observer/etc). I think maybe I'll open up a newsletter where I'll be a critic of the critics. Because consequently one does not need to have any talent within the endeavor they are espousing to follow in order to become one. I have to have no knowledge whatsoever of being a critic. I don't even have to be a journalist major. I don't even have to write good English. All I have to do is put pen to paper and publish it and send it out and see how many people I can get to buy it. And consequently I think the thing that bugs me is that after a point of having read a number of the publications I sense an aloof, condescending arrogance on the part of the critics as they express their opinions.

My contention is this. Let's take Mr. Keller and give him a couple of bodyslams twice a year and do the same with Mr. Meltzer or whoever else would do this thing. Or let me have The Ultimate Warrior catch you with a clothesline coming off the ropes, just one or two a year, and let you have that feeling, that flavor, that experience. Let you get your bell rung and then have somebody stand over you and say, "Get your ass up and write." The flavor of what you right then may have a shade or a nuance slightly different than what you have written over the years. If you don't think I am right, you are a fool.

KELLER: THE NEWSLETTER IS DEFINITELY TAKING A FAN'S PERSPECTIVE RATHER THAN A WRESTLER'S. AS A FAN, I BELIEVE I HAVE THE RIGHT TO CRITIQUE AND REVIEW WHAT I SEE.

BOCKWINKEL: True. And sometimes what is said is fine. but, until you've walked in that man's shoes, how do you know what the walk of the path is like?

KELLER: I'VE HEARD THAT MANY TIMES. "IF YOU STEPPED IN THE RING, YOU'D KNOW." I THINK THAT IT'S ONE THING TO STEP INTO THE RING, BUT IT'S ANOTHER TO SAY TO THE WRESTLER "HOW ABOUT IF YOU WATCHED THE SPORT YOU RESPECT AND LOVE AND FIND THAT SOME OF THE THINGS THEY ARE DOING ARE FRUSTRATING TO YOU?"

BOCKWINKEL: Do you have answers as how those can be corrected?

KELLER: THERE ARE ALWAYS SUGGESTIONS. YOU CAN ALWAYS SAY WHAT YOU WOULD HAVE ENJOYED MORE.

BOCKWINKEL: Sure.

KELLER: YOU CAN NEVER SAY YOU'RE DEFINITELY RIGHT OR THAT THEY ARE DEFINITELY WRONG. I DON'T THINK NEWSLETTERS, LIKE MANY THINGS, PRESENT THINGS AS FACT. IT IS DEFINITELY AN EDITORIAL OR OPINION POSITION. IF SOMEBODY LIKE MYSELF OR ANOTHER WRITER WATCHES THE SPORT, STUDIES THE SPORT, AND LIVES THE SPORT AS CLOSE AS YOU CAN AS FAN, SUCH AS TRAVELING THE COUNTRY WATCHING SHOWS, REVIEWING TAPES OVER AND OVER AGAIN, WRITING ABOUT IT, TALKING TO DOZENS OF PEOPLE ON THEIR IMPRESSIONS OF WHAT THEY SEE ON TV - PEOPLE RANGING FROM ACTUAL WRESTLERS OR BEING INVOLVED IN THE BUSINESS TO JUST CASUAL FANS. I THINK IN MANY WAYS THAT QUALIFIES ONE MORE TO WRITE A NEWSLETTER THAN ACTUALLY BEING A WRESTLER. I KNOW WRESTLERS WHO HAVE NO IDEA WHAT'S GOING ON ANYWHERE OUTSIDE OF THEIR MATCHES.

BOCKWINKEL: I agree with you. I think the only time I take issue is when the inflection or the tone of the critic or critique starts to get condescending. I guess it's like what camera angle, kind of like Monday Night Football. You see an instant replay, but when you see it from one side, he was definitely out of bounds. That's the way it seems to be written. But I've been there and I've seen it from the other three sides and that's when I get pissed off. It's, "You asshole, you only saw it from one side and you're only writing it from one side." Then you're not doing the thing that you, quote, "love so much" the justice it deserves. Mind you, though, a lot of times I do agree with what is written.

I think one of the other things that I get uptight about in respect to critics is they wanna tell everybody what's wrong or what's not right or what's of poor standard or of poor quality yet they never really, other than as you say suggestions, have gone through the agony and ecstasy of it all, so they don't really have the positive answers as to how that can be corrected. That's one of those things about any of the sports. They are so complex and so difficult. How do you explain a great football team that goes out and cleans house for three games in a row and then one week they are all of a sudden flat on their face. You

don't know what they've gone through. That's the way it goes.

KELLER: HOW DO YOU REACT TO THE APPROACHES VARYING FROM BILL APTER'S TREATMENT OF WRESTLING AS COMPLETELY SERIOUS AND POSSIBLY RUNNING STORIES THAT ARE DIFFICULT FOR AN AVERAGE PERSON TO TAKE SERIOUSLY TO THE OTHER EXTREME OF TREATING WRESTLING AS MORE ENTERTAINMENT AND THEATER WITH ATHLETICS INVOLVED THAN PURE COMPETITION?

BOCKWINKEL: There are times I know that Bill Apter may have taken literary licence and I don't agree with that. Even myself, I know him personally and I've always gotten along with the man very well. But at the same time, all sports are entertainment. When the Christians were being eaten by the lions, it was entertainment. I don't know how the Christians felt about the entertainment factor, but that was entertainment. So I don't get uptight when they say it's entertainment.

KELLER: DO YOU GET UPTIGHT WHEN SOMEONE SAYS THE DREADED PHRASE, "IT'S FAKE?"

BOCKWINKEL: Oh yeah. Oh yeah. I do, simply because I say, let me give you a fake bodyslam, let me give you a fake dropkick, let me give you a fake clothesline, let me give you a fake suplex. You can't believe how fast they want to back off.

KELLER: WHAT DO YOU THINK IS THE CORRECT APPROACH TO COVERING PRO WRESTLING AS A JOURNALIST?

BOCKWINKEL: Cover the efforts made. Cover the energy and the intent. Cover the energy expended by whomever it may be.

KELLER: HOW DO YOU FEEL ABOUT VINCE IGNORING WRESTLER'S HISTORY?

BOCKWINKEL: I was being interviewed on a radio show out East not long ago and the caller said that they were very put-off by the fact that Vince McMahon doesn't give any credibility to The Widow Maker as being a Windham and the former NWA star. And I say, "What is your problem with that?" He says, "Well, Vince McMahon completely ignores or denies it." I say, "He doesn't deny it. Does he ignore it? Yes he does. If the service manager from Sears Automotive Division is hired by the service department of Pennies, do you think they put a big sign in Pennies saying 'Formerly the Sears Service Manager, Now Here?' No. They've got his name up above and they're selling the Pennies product and in the best way and shape and light they can. They are not going to spent any of their time, effort or energy pushing something of the past. So my contention is to the hardcore fan such as yourself, you know who he is. To the softcore fan, do you think he gives a damn? So why are you uptight with Vince McMahon? You didn't you hear the NFL talking about the USFL when it was around either.

KELLER: WHAT IS YOUR REACTION TO VINCE' PROCLAMATION TO THE ATHLETIC COMMISSION?

BOCKWINKEL: Some people come up to me and say Vince McMahon said it's "all show" to the State Athletic Commission. I say sure. For somebody's who's taken a million and a half dollars of your own money and not done anything for you, if they want me to tell them the sky is blue when it's green, I'll tell them the sky is blue. If they go, 'Well, gee wiz. If that's the case, we won't take the million and a half from you.' If somebody says that's not a very strong point of ethics or integrity, I'd have to say let's see where this million and half dollars is going. And all it's really doing is going to the governor so that the governor can give jobs to a bunch a cronies in the state, whichever state it is that has the state athletic commission, and if, for instance, the million and a half was for disability insurance or health insurance or retirement fund, I don't think Vince McMahon would argue. But all it is is money that's being used for political play. So they're setting the standards of no ethics and corruptibility and all the other crap that goes along with big politics. So I don't begrudge what Vince McMahon did there.

KELLER: DO YOU STILL FOLLOW WRESTLING AS A FAN?

BOCKWINKEL: Not as closely as I used to. The things that I do with the AWA has me following that. I have a number of friends around the country that keep me abreast on what's going on. When I speak to them, I get the tid bits on what's going on. I occasionally watch it on TV. I'm empathic and sympathetic to a lot of the things that are taking place. I would like to see a lot of better things happen for the entire profession. Things are going fine for the WWF. As far as the NWA and AWA are concerned, I would like to see more positive things taking place.

KELLER: HOW DO YOU LOOK AT THE CHANGES THAT HAVE OCCURRED THROUGHOUT THE EIGHTIES?

BOCKWINKEL: The changes in the eighties were inevitable changes. Gary Juster at least fifteen years ago, when he was going to law school, had a friend who did a thesis on

cable television. At that time Gary Juster furnished me a copy of this thesis which I found extremely interesting. Both Gary Juster and I talked about it and said that whomever gets a handle on this animal in the next decade or two will get a handle on wrestling. Vince McMahon was able to do that. Such people as Verne Gagne and Bill Watts and Mr. Crockett were not. At this juncture even the potent powers of Mr Turner and TBS, they've got a handle on cable TV. Maybe in another fifteen years cable TV will be on an equal with the networks, but right now they don't. One of the problems, no doubt, that the NWA is having is how to integrate the power of the cable TV as well as the syndicated TV. These two animals have to be made to blend. Vince McMahon has been able to do this.

Now I don't mean just USA and TBS, I'm speaking of this thing called pay-per-view. That's another cable animal that's needs to be understood. Vince McMahon seems to be getting a far better handle on it than the rest of the people have done.

KELLER: WHAT ADVICE DO YOU LEND TO PROMOTERS OF TODAY AND TOMORROW?

BOCKWINKEL: One of the problems you have today is being able to tie up very good talent. With the extinction of the smaller regional areas, you don't have that many matches going on around the country. So a young rookie, instead of taking two years to learn, it may take him five or six. In that five or six he may forget about it. That's one of the sad things about the whole damn thing. If someone's got the guts to go along with a small promotion if they can make money, then as soon as you develop a good piece of talent you know and I know he's going to get snatched up by the NWA or the WWF.

KELLER: IF YOU COULD WRESTLE ONE MAN, BOTH OF YOU BEING IN YOUR PRIME, WHO WOULD IT BE AND WHY?

BOCKWINKEL: I think Ric Flair. I wouldn't even mind wrestling (Ted) DiBiase or Snake (Jake Roberts). I wrestled Flair once around 82'. I never fought DiBiase. I fought the Snake one time early in his career and I knew at that time he was going to be good.

KELLER: RIGHT NOW WHO DO YOU FEEL IS THE GREATEST WRESTLER?

BOCKWINKEL: Curt Hennig. In every aspect. A total package.

KELLER: WHO DO YOU FEEL IS THE ALL-TIME GREATEST WRESTLER, EXCLUDING YOURSELF?

BOCKWINKEL: (chuckles) I say it tough because there have been so many all-time greats. There were different greats at different times. One of the greats who never reached his potential was Billy Robinson. He had tremendous ability. Ray Stevens. And Verne was great. Flair. Dory Funk Jr. Terry Funk. Dick the Bruiser in his prime was just outstanding. These guys were all just terrific.

KELLER: CAN YOU PINPOINT ONE ALL-TIME GREATEST?

BOCKWINKEL: No, and I'll tell you why. On any given day these guys all rate from a 97% to 100% and on the blink of an eye, or the rain, or how much humidity was in the, one would be 99.5 and other would be 97.5% and the next day it would be just the opposite.

I'll tell you another guy who was a tremendous wrestler who people didn't give credit to: Bruiser Brody. When he had his head on straight he was tough to touch. He was in a category that was unbelievable. And he was a big man. You're talkin' 6'5", 300 pounds throwing dropkicks almost as good as Brunzell. Just unbelievable the things he could do in the ring. He was an extremely moody man with a lot of strange brainwaves that made him think in all the different ways he did.

KELLER: DO YOU THINK, AS VERNE GAGNE SAID, HE PROBABLY GOT WHAT HE ASKED FOR?

BOCKWINKEL: No. No, not at all. I don't think he asked to be killed. And I would have to sit down and say that Verne Gagne probably made one of the asinine statements he ever made in his life. It was something that was said because he's on the other side of a philosophical point with the man. I think it was more his anger speaking. I think if you could really sit there and pull him apart you could say from a Christian thinking mind, do you really think he deserved to be killed because he had a different philosophical belief difference with somebody else? I



NICK BOCKWINKEL ACCEPTING UAWF "RING OF IMMORTAL" AWARD (8/89)

think he would back down and say, "No, no I don't." But certainly he said what he said.

The point is, no promotion was forced with a gun to use Frank Bruiser Brody. If they didn't like what Bruiser Brody felt, thought, the way he acted, that's okay, then you just don't use him. And true, he would drive a lot of promotions up the wall because he would give them a lot of different promises and then he would change his mind in the middle of the stream or he would say, "Well, I don't like the way this deal is going and I want the deal to be different." And they say, "You gave me your word that this would be the deal." Well, you just go through that moment, that day, that time, and then you forget about that person. But he had a tremendous charismatic effect. So, if anybody, the promoters were the ones that kind of in a sense deserved the headache that he gave them.

KELLER: DID YOU EVER WRESTLE BRUISER BRODY?

BOCKWINKEL: Oh yeah. I sure did both in Texas and Japan. There's no question that if you weren't on your toes he'd run over you like a train. Absolutely, you could not take the man lightly at all. On the other hand, I've had matches with him where I'd swear he was sick. One time he runs over you like a train, especially if you just stand there, and the next time you kind of wonder if he's walkin' the same park you are.

KELLER: WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHT ON WALLY KARBO?

BOCKWINKEL: Wally Karbo, God love him, I think was one of the promoters supreme. Wally's the kind of guy, if he could give you an answer, he would. If he couldn't, or he didn't want to hurt your feelings, he would say, "Pal, let me check it out." And you can't say that's a bad thing to do because rather than make an enemy out of you, so to speak, by telling you the fact that he did know, he'd just back off of it. What would you call it, "How to win friends and influence people." I'm sure that's the same way Dale Carnegie would say to do it. He was, in a sense, a consummate promoter. The greatest dirty old man I know.

KELLER: HOW ABOUT GENE OKERLUND?

BOCKWINKEL: Gene Okerlund. Superb announcer. He just has the flavor and the whole thing. Of course, he's been in the broadcast business for years. He seemed to really find his niche in the wrestling world.

KELLER: WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHT ON MARTY O'NEIL?

BOCKWINKEL: One of the most gracious little old men and sports casters around. The nice thing about Marty O'Neil is he never in any way, shape, or form cared to have the limelight. He knew that he was there to hold the microphone and make you the star.

KELLER: LEE MARSHALL?

BOCKWINKEL: Excellent. I enjoy working with Lee very, very much. Tremendously enthusiastic. He gets to goin' and as a color man, I'm not sure I can run fast enough to run on the same cart because if he gets to rolling I have to wait until he takes a breather and then throw something else in.

KELLER: MICKEY KARCH?

BOCKWINKEL: Mick Karch, god love him. What can I say about Mick. One of the most charming individuals. He's been so sincere and very, very nice and dedicated to the Bockwinkel efforts, the "Bockwinkel Brigade." He started a fan club for me twenty years ago and I have to chuckle. I told him at the time when he asked if he could do it, "Sure, go ahead, don't expect any help from me. I will give you no assistance. I will not cooperate in any way because that's the way I am." Damn it, he carried it out for like seventeen, eighteen years.

KELLER: WHAT DO YOU THINK OF HULK HOGAN?

BOCKWINKEL: A lot of people have the tendency to really blast Hulk Hogan. Hogan to me has turned into a tremendous, tremendous wrestler. Because of the hype that surrounds him, when I sit there and I watch him, I look at just what this man is doing in the ring - his sense of timing, his sense of movement, his abilities, his shortcuts. As far as I'm concerned, especially for somebody his size, he's come along tremendously. That's why Flair became as great as he became. Simply because when you're the champion you're wrestling all of the different challengers who all have some great ability, otherwise they wouldn't be stepping into the ring with you. And it constantly rubs off. The longer you're champion, the better you actually become. You don't ever deteriorate. You constantly improve. The Hulk Hogan today is far, far, far superior to what he was four or five years ago. Now I hear the same with Flair. I hear people saying he's getting old. Oh, God, please, give me a break. There are so few people who can keep up with him, it's unbelievable.

KELLER: BOBBY HEENAN?

BOCKWINKEL: The The consummate manager within the wrestling profession. Probably one of the best of all-time, if not the best.

KELLER: BRUNO SAMMARTINO?

BOCKWINKEL: Bruno. Needless to say, another man who proved his credentials by being able to stay on top for a fifteen year period. One of the great names in the sport and deservedly so.

KELLER: WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THE NEGATIVE ATTITUDE HE HAS TAKEN LATELY TOWARD TODAY'S PRO WRESTLING?

BOCKWINKEL: Sour grapes. I feel bad because, I don't care who it is or what it is, when the time comes to pass on the baton, you pass it on. Not begrudge the fact that it's your time to pass it on and the next guy running the race is the one who everyone is watching, not the guy who ran the last yards.

KELLER: VINCE MCMAHON?

BOCKWINKEL: Probably from a wrestling promotion point of view, as brilliant as any mind has been. Simply, he picked up the prices in the early eighties what Gary Juster and I had discussed from fifteen years ago. He took those prices, looked at them hard, formulated in his own mind which way one should go and went with. As far as I'm concerned a lot of people want to begrudge him for his success. I think that's just what it is, too - sour grapes. There was nothing that guaranteed that the direction he was going to take was going to work, but he took the chance. There not anyone in a promotional position that wouldn't have done what Vince McMahon did.

KELLER: ANDRE THE GIANT?

BOCKWINKEL: Phenomenal individual. He's just so big, he's so massive. All of a sudden you realize how very human you are no matter how much success you've created for yourself, when you step in the ring with him you say, "Oh hell, I'm back at square one."

KELLER: WHAT WAS ANDRE REALLY LIKE?

BOCKWINKEL: In his early days he was very jovial, very fun type person. But he's been hurting over the years with a number of injuries and as big as he is, life is not made easy for him. He's always been a gentleman, more than most people I've seen. I know he's had his bad moments. I've always had a very respectful, professional relation with the man. I've treated him with respect and likewise he's done the same with me. He's one of the world's unique monuments in this sport as well as all of them put together.

KELLER: WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON JERRY LAWLER?

BOCKWINKEL: A lot of people don't give him the credit he deserves, but at the same time, Jerry, to me, has tremendous talent and abilities. It's just a shame that he didn't at an earlier age get into some of the larger promotions.

KELLER: WHAT ARE YOUR PLANS FOR THE FUTURE?

BOCKWINKEL: I will continued to do some color. At some point in the future I may become involved a little more and possibly maybe not. It depends. Needless to say, my first love is professional wrestling. Consequently, I will always have my finger on the pulse of it somewhere.

KELLER: WOULD YOU GET INTO PROMOTING?

BOCKWINKEL: It's very possible. If I saw all the right parameters and somebody wanted to put the money up I definitely could be enticed.

KELLER: DO YOU THINK YOU WOULD BE QUALIFIED TO BE BOOKER OF, SAY, THE NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE?

BOCKWINKEL: Oh, I've definitely got the ability. In fact, one my strong suits, I'm sure, is my administrative ability. I'm not quite sure my creative ability is as strong as my administrative ability. For instance, Ray Stevens had an ingeniously creative mind, but administrator, not at all. So I feel I have the moxy to put together an organization if it needed to be.

KELLER: THANKS FOR TAKING TIME OUT FOR "TORCH TALK."

BOCKWINKEL: Sure thing. You have a good new year. ***

(EYEWITNESS 89 continued from page 5)

HOT LINES BURN FANS

The NWA introduced the "Wrestling Hotline" with a number so easy to remember "even an idiot like Paul E. Dangerously can remember it." The hotline which costs quite a bit to listen to was plugged heavily by the NWA, especially during big events for postgame wrap-up shows. Often times the price was not given so many young fans or Ding Dong fans might have called the number not knowing the heavy charge. In any case, Verne was quick to pick on this idea, and introduced his version of the 900 number.

FAREWELL TO MEMPHIS

That is what Lance Russell was saying to all of his viewers as he accepted a job with the NWA. Tony Shivaone left the NWA after getting a better offer to announce for the WWF. The void was filled by one many considered the second best announcer in wrestling. Russell took over as host of World Wide Wrestling. After not being as impressive as expected, he moved to team with Bob Caudle on NWA Pro Wrestling. World Wide was hosted by Chris Cruise and Terry Funk by the end of the year. In the meantime, Dave Brown moved from host to co-host of CWA Wrestling in Memphis, with various co-hosts replacing him.

STUDD FLEAS THE FED

The Royal Rumble in January of 1989 was won by everyone's favorite boring, colorless wrestler, Big John Studd. Not long after John Studd left the WWF, leaving Andre the Giant no one to wrestle at the arenas. Much to the fan's delight, the only man below John Studd on the most popular sleeping pill list took his place, Hillbilly Jim.

CAR LIFT CHALLENGE

The Olympians, Brad Rheingans and Ken Patera, were challenged to a car lift competition with Destruction Crew. If the Crew won the challenge they would get a title shot against the champs, The Olympians. As everyone and their cousin expected, Bloom and Enos attacked Patera as he was about to lift the car. It makes sense, since Bloom was able to lift it three times already, The Crew had a lot to worry about since Patera was in the best shape of his life and hadn't lifted the car yet. Powder was thrown everywhere, and both Patera and Rheingans were injured, never to team again.

GONE IN A FLASH

Scott "Flash" Norton was Verne Gagne's answer to Hulk Hogan. We always wondered what "Flash" meant, as it certainly didn't refer to his speed. Now we realize it referred to how fast he would be gone from the AWA. Soon after Verne Gagne told the Torch, "I made (Hulk) what he is. And we've got Scott Norton now," Norton quit the AWA. Rumor said he was asked to be Gary Hart's bodyguard. Norton's contract with the AWA did not allow him to wrestle for another group, so the rookie was back to cement work full-time.

SHIFTING INTO OVERDRIVE

Jeff Warner and Tim Hunt, "Maximum Overdrive," stepped out of Ed Sharkey's camp into PWA main events. This powerful looking team began greener than grass, but their charisma and size was enough compensation. Maximum Overdrive feuded with Bret and Matt Derringer much of the year and drew record crowds at George's and other buildings across the Twin Cities area. Overdrive even got a tryout with the NWA in Chicago wrestling The Tokyo Bullets in what turned out to be an uncooperative disaster. While Hunt has dropped from the wrestling scene, Jeff Warner is getting great exposure in Portland wrestling for Don Owen's promotion.

TEAM CHALLENGE CONCEPT INTRODUCED

The lackluster AWA TV shows needed a kick. A new idea was introduced called "The Team Challenge" concept. Three captains selected by "the wrestling press across the country" were Sgt. Slaughter, Baron Von Raschke, and Larry Zbyszko. They drew names of AWA wrestlers assembling their team members. Every week on the syndicated show a "Team Challenge" match took place. Some were normal tag team and singles matches, while others involved footballs, women and men teaming together, and even turkeys. The concept was not a bomb, but it was not blasted by fans either. The points continue to be compiled until there will supposedly be a play-off of sorts this summer.

PROPHET PROVES PROFITABLE

Ricky Rice traveled to the AWA, Calgary, and the PWA in 1989 looking for his niche in wrestling. He may have found it late in the year as he turned heel and began claiming he was a prophet. The gimmick has turned out to be hilarious as he shouts into booing crowds "Have my followers lost faith?" He closed the year feuding with former "Top Gun" partner, Derrick Dukes. ***



BOCKWINKEL COLOR COMMENTATING FOR THE AWA

READER PREDICTIONS

For 1990 & Beyond

Everyone is wondering, "What is in store for pro wrestling in 1990?" Well, wonder no longer. The Torch's impromptu panel of fortune tellers has put together this collection of prediction for 1990.

ELYSE ZOIS: Elizabeth will beat Queen Sherri in a Winner Takes the King match. Norman the Lunatic will jump to the WWF, develop a mad crush on Liz, and feud with Randy for the rest of the year. Sherri, meanwhile will manager Mr. Perfect who will call her the "Perfect Manager." The Genius will sue for palimony.

Bobby Heenan will give Gorilla Monsoon a break and wrestle him in a specially reinforced ring. While the crowd erupted, Monsoon will literally explode and leave Heenan hanging from the rafters.

The Canadian Earthquake will relocate to the United States, change his name to the San Fransico Earthquake, and team with Hurricane Hugo (Dino Bravo under a mask). Together they will be known as "The Natural Disasters."

The Hart Foundation will be involved in a scandal when it becomes known that they have kept contributions sent to them by people who thought they were The Heart Foundation.

Lanny Poffo and Mark Young will form a new tag team called The Rockettes. They will capture the tag titles from Demolition when Lanny traps Smash in the corner and read poetry to him until he submits.

Zeus will be forced to retire due to injury sustained while hitting himself in the neck during interviews.

Rick Martel will retire from wrestling to pursue a career in modeling. Hopefully, he will take Lord Alfred with him.

Tony Shiovone will recover his memory and tell Gorilla Monsoon what Ron Garvin's finishing hold is called. He will be rewarded for this deed by being hired as co-host of Spotlight with Sherri Martel.

Hulk Hogan will defend his title in the Meadowlands Arena where he hasn't been since last August.

EVAN GINZBURG: Since Hulk Hogan's superman routine limits him number of credible opponents, I can see a Piper turn somewhere down the line. Outside of Windham, Ultimate, and Hennig, there is no one else - and we are talking an entire year.

STEPHEN CARUSO: Bret and Owen Hart, The Honkeytonk Man, Terry Taylor, Ronnie Garvin, Ted DiBiase, Diamond Dallas Page, and J.J. Dillon will go to the NWA.

Paul E. Dangerously, Sting, and Sid Vicious will go to the WWF.

The NWA will come to its senses and fire Steve Williams, Tommy Rich, Norman the Lunatic, Jimmy Garvin, and Tom Zenk.

Zeus will retire and become McMahon's gardener.

Lex Luger will win the NWA title from Ric Flair in February. Flair will regain the title in a cage match at The Great American Bash. Flair will lose his job as booker of the NWA and Bill Watts will be hired for the job.

The AWA will fold.

Now that Eric Embry is no longer the booker, the USWA will become more exciting. Marc Lowrance will quit announcing and attend Chris Adams' wrestling school. Six months later Marc will begin wrestling as "Maniac" Marc Lowrance, a 275 pound bohemioth to prove that Adams can train anyone to become a wrestler.

Andre the Giant will retire, thank god.

Summerslam 90 will be a flop, drawing only 5000 fans to Meadowlands Arena.

Terry Gordy will win the USWA Title from Jerry Lawler.

After Flair loss the title to Luger, Ole and Arn will dump Flair and reform the Four Horsemen with Luger. Ted DiBiase will be the fourth member.

Vince McMahon will become so desperate for heel tag teams that he'll reform Mr. Fuji and Mr. Saito, who will win the WWF tag belts.

The Road Warriors will split and face each other in a big grudge match at the PPV Great American Bash in July.

Brutis Beefcake will turn against Hulk Hogan and cut off the Hulk's remaining hair. They will square off at Summerslam 90.

Brian Pillman will win the NWA TV Title from The Great Muta.

KEN DOLNEY JR.: Wrestlemania VI on April 1, 1990 in the Toronto Skydome. History will be made.

Big news, The Road Warriors are fed up being second place in magazine ratings to Demolition and have told Ted Turner that they are going to the WWF for one match to destroy Demolition.

Turner thinks it is a good idea to have them destroy WWF talent one by one. Vince McMahon says he will get The Road Warriors for one match and then they will stay. The Road

Warriors versus Demolition is billed as a tag team title match.

Tom Zenk left another promotion to come back to the WWF. He wants a Strike Force feud, but both Zenk and Martel want Tito Santana. President Jack Tunney puts them in a three man Strike Force battle royal.

Randy Savage becomes jealous of Zeus because he is the only man to put fear into Hogan's eyes. Though Hogan will destroy Zeus. Savage wants to prove he is done being Zeus's babysitter and will finish him off for good.

Revenge has been running rampant. Ted DiBiase has been silent, but his inner feelings have started to show. He cannot buy a title. He tried buying Andre the Giant, but Andre didn't know that instead of offering DiBiase a title shot, he handed the belt to DiBiase illegally, thus forfeiting the belt. DiBiase finally vows revenge on Andre for his stupidity.

Brothers are feuding. They don't know who they are anymore, fans confuse them all the time calling Earl, Dave, and Dave, Earl. Dave and Earl are at odds concerning who's who. They take their battle to the ring with the special referee being Danny Davis.

Bobby Heenan lost all of his demerits by threatening Roddy Piper and showing up at the "Studio B" door with Rick Rude on Prime Time Wrestling. So Gorilla Monsoon had Jack Tunney punish Heenan by putting him in a special challenge match "Pin the Tail on the Weasel." Where Heenan will come out dressed in a weasel suit. Piper will succeed and pin the tail on Heenan.

Bret Hart will team with brother Owen hart to take on The Rougeaus Brothers for the Canadian bragging rights even though The Rougeaus are self-proclaimed "All-American Boys" from Memphis.

Saphire has told Dusty Rhodes that Akeem the African Dream is a disgrace to her heritage. Dusty has vowed revenge on Slick and will try to deprogram the former One Man Gang.

Jim Neidhart ran into Rick Rude and told him when he drops the anvil on him he will have to pose for Garbage Man Weekly setting up that match for Wrestlemania.

The Bushwackers are signed to take on The Powers of Pain in a special match - a "Double Dare" food fight. Fans in the front row are cautioned to bring raincoats.

Jake "The Snake" Roberts is in a handicap match versus Sherri Martel and Virgil. Stipulations are when Sherri is in she has to wrestle Damien. When Virgil's in, he has to wrestle himself. In my eyes Jake will only have to watch as Sherry and Virgil will end up pinning themselves.

In the main event, Hulk Hogan puts up the WWF Title and quiets his critic. He will fight the self-crazed maniac, the Ultimate Warrior.

Hulk is convinced The Hulkamaniacs will outcheer The Ultimate Warriors. He also said his twenty-four inch pythons are superior to The Warriors twenty-four gasps for breath.

This should be an interesting card. I am not sure if it will be comedy or wrestling, but as Gorilla Monsoon said, "It's available for only 34.95. Never before has so much talent been available for so few dollars. It will be history in the making, so don't be shut out."

STEVE YOHE: After Starrcade, Flair will be challenged by Great Muta and Lex Luger, with Flair losing the title to Luger. The minds at the NWA will have Flair penciled in as the number one contender and US Champ, but there will be a falling out. Flair will spend some time in Japan helping Baba promote in the US. By 1992 Flair will be finishing his career in the WWF. 1989 will be the last year Flair wins the "Wrestler of the Year" award.

The Great Muta will turn babyface and challenge Luger. He will be even more popular as a good guy and will make a big return to Japan.

Steamboat will sign with the WWF in late-1990 and be wasted.

Sting will remain in the same position he is now - never becoming number one. He'll win the "Most Deproved" award in 1992.

Hulk Hogan will defeat The Ultimate Warrior at Wrestlemania in a face vs. face match. The sheets will reveal it was supposed to be a draw, but Hogan demanded the win. Rick Rude or Dino Bravo will interfere. Hogan will go on to turn heel in 1991. After two great years, the now fat champ will return in 1993 to enjoy his millions.

Andre will retire in 1990 after making friends with Hogan and the fans.

After retiring in 1992, Dusty Rhodes will become the top booker for the WWF after a power struggle that places him above Pat Patterson. The WWF will fall from number one by 1994.

(PREDICTIONS continued on page 34)

PROMOTING ABC'S:

What Goes Into Putting A Wrestling Card Together

by Ray Whebbe

Baron Von Raschke is known for being one of the nicest men to ever put on the wrestling tights. He's also one of the wisest. On a Twin Cities "Wrestling Radio" show in 1989 he geniusly stated, "As a wrestler it's my job to wrestle. A promoter's job is to promote."

What a mouthful Baron said. Unfortunately as we look ahead to the nineties we see less and less "wrestlers" per se and even less "promoters."

Let's face it, promoting wrestling is a tough job. First off, the majority of the public scoffs at the sport. Some say it's fake, many say it's stupid, and others believe it insults their intelligence. While all the above may be true to some degree, there is a small portion of the public that loves the grunt and groan game.

Those who love wrestling are nearly as "tough sells" as those who poke fun at the sport. We that love it are critics, sceptics, and non-believers all in one. We've also been a bit battered and have reason to be leery.

Some promoters believe promoting is opening doors and counting money. For rock promoters, that may often be the case. However, in wrestling, plan to work hard and pray, not to profit, but to break even.

Promoting wrestling obviously is not for everyone. A promoter must have thick skin, tons of energy, and deep pockets. Honesty helps, but in this business, it's almost nonexistent.

Most independent promoters have their work cut out. They have little to say about who they hire (the promotion sets the matches) and must guarantee a fee to the league. The PWA, which I believe offers a great plan, starts packages at \$1500. The AWA will listen to \$2500 on up to \$10,000 depending on the show and location. Bruiser's group has been known to ask \$4000+. The Sheik will take the same. And the list goes on.

Different wrestlers ask for different fees. Regional status, when they were on TV, who they want to get even with, how their bankbook reads, and what a job may mean for their future are all factors on how much a wrestler asks for.

Regional status is important. In NE Minneapolis, Tommy Ferrara draws more than anyone ever could. In Miami he may not be able to draw flies. The Great Wojo (Ohio-Indiana), Larry Winters (New Jersey), Billy Jack (Portland), Danny Gage (Houston), Rufus Jones (Des Moines), and Bruce Hart (Calgary) may draw in their own areas, but at George's in Fridley, MN Tommy Ferrara is the king.

If a wrestler recently had a good TV run their worth may be up as much as fifty percent. Face it, Soldat Ustinov, Doug Somers, Derrick Dukes, Ricky Rice, and Tom Zenk are worth more to the PWA after TV runs.

If a wrestler is doing well financially he or she may work for kicks. Although most are beyond enjoying wrestling some will do "good time" cards. When Tom Zenk returned from Japan with a pocketful of cash, he worked "Wrestle For Shelter" for free. Bruiser Brody offered to do the same before he was killed.

Many also will come to a small promotion for future referrals, to pay past favors, to meet new guys, to see if opportunity could arise, or to open doors. The Fantastics, Tim Flowers, The Russian Brute, Mad Dog Vachon, Art Crews, and others did such in the PWA.

Yet overall, the sport remains a business for the wrestlers and promoters. Both Ed Sharkey and Tom Zenk has repeatedly told me that there's only one reason to be in wrestling - money!

As a promoter making money can be rough. The simplest formula is to sell more tickets than you pay in expenses. The expenses can range from building costs, clean ups, security, and concessionaires, to wrestlers, the ring, the ring set-up, referees, and advertizing. If I can get a bar owner or civic group to sponsor the card, you're home free. On guarantees, when a bar or sponsor pays a set amount to the promotion in exchange for all ticket sales, the high-end profit isn't there. However, the losses are never there. If a bar or sponsor invests a guarantee or money they'll get off their butts and sell tickets. If there's no investment, expect them to do no work.

Cutting corners is the gimmick. I do whatever I can to find a free building when promoting for the PWA. Fans or halfway houses (for free tickets) will clean-up. Security can be future wrestlers or fans. Concessions can be bartered for free rent (give them the rights) or be sold by civic groups (who'll you'll ask for a percentage of sales). At Rock and Wrestle for Shelter last summer I sold the exclusive concession rights for \$600.

The ring costs \$200 to \$300 for rental and set up. Travel can add up to quite a big sum. PWA ring master Ron Peterson charged \$800 for a trip to Chicago. If there's more there the ring man is like the wrestler and he'll take it. The WWF has been rumored to pay as much as \$3500 for a

night's ring rental.

Advertising can also be bartered. Many radio stations will take free tickets in exchange for ads. In smaller towns, newspapers often will too.

Posters can also bring added revenue. Tommy Ferrara sold \$1500 worth of ads on the "Wrestle for Shelter I" poster. Todd Lawrence raked in another \$2000 in program ad monies. To lure advertisers, give them tickets.

As for paying wrestlers - give them what you can but always take a little for you. Without you there is no show.

Now as I began writing this feature, one pal asked, "Why give away some of your tricks?" Simply, not everyone can pull it off. You need credibility, honesty, and talent. Sorry folks, but most can't pull it off.

Promoting is tough. Most media outlets won't touch wrestling. In the Twin Cities we're fortunate to have Mick Karch's "Saturday Night At Ringside" wrestling block and my "Wrestling Radio" show as P.R. vehicles. Sending out press releases with photos to all local papers four to six weeks in advance can help.

The PWA operates in a basic bones fashion. A promoter books the site, Sharkey agrees, and everyone from Mick Karch to Terry Katzman throw in their booking ideas. Eventually all decisions are approved or vetoed by Ed Sharkey.

In most federations no one man has the say. Swerves can be done from wrestlers, referees, ringmen, office stooges, relatives, and others. And they can be expected like, "One man wasn't given a push because he got a girl the star wanted." Unfortunately more times than not, promotions overlook what fans really want.

The PWA tries to never overlook the fans. "They pay the bills," said Sharkey, "so we have to cater to them."

That is the biggest key. Give the fans what they want. Listen to them; don't force-feed them.

I've also learned a few rules. Cut back on gimmicks. Just because you want to see a match doesn't mean fans do. Never insult your market's intelligence - they know nearly as much and they know what they want. Use one to three old-timers. Push young talent to high limits. Ask sponsors for the moon. Use attractive posters. Don't listen to frustrated jobbers. Use only wrestlers who'll show up. Have a sense of humor. Give what you're proud of. Have fun. Ask for and listen to help. Don't let wrestlers swear. And last but not least - get the money! ***



TORCH DECAWARDS

THE 1980'S

Welcome to the results of the Torch DecAward Balloting. Your ballots have been compiled and the following are the lists of the top ten vote getters in each category. The percentage of total points received are listed to the right of each wrestler's name based on compiled points where first place votes received ten points, second place-five points, third place-three points, and votes beyond third place-1 point.

Following the top ten lists are comments by readers concerning their choices for Decade Awards.

WRESTLER OF THE DECADE

1) RIC FLAIR	54.1%
2) HULK HOGAN	22.2%
3) RICKY STEAMBOAT	7.6%
4) BRUISER BRODY	3.4%
5) RODDY PIPER	2.7%
6) TED DIBIASE	1.6%
7) RANDY SAVAGE	1.6%
8) HARLEY RACE	1.4%
9) NICK BOCKWINKEL	1.0%
10) TERRY FUNK	1.0%
10) KERRY VON ERICH	1.0%
OTHERS	3.4%



STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) Ric Flair was the man who typified the best in wrestling throughout the eighties inside the ring and outside the ring. 2) Hulk Hogan was the number one face and drawing card the entire decade. 3) Harley Race outlived his own era and signified the end of the sixties as wrestling knew them by 1987.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Ric Flair. There are others I like better, but Flair has been the mainstay of the NWA for most of the decade.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): Ric Flair - No contest. I must have seen him at least 150 times live this decade and he had a great match every time no matter who he was in with or whether he was a face or a heel. I feel privileged to have seen him win the NWA belt twice (from Race & Steamboat) and lose it once (to Rhodes) in person.

2) Bruiser Brody - The only person ever in the sport whose persona scared the hell out of me. A great worker who was his own man.

3) Hulk Hogan - The top draw of all-time even if he stinks in the ring.

4) Ted DiBiase - Take away his last two years with the WWF and his decade is a close second to Flair.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): Ric Flair - No one else can even come close to the original "Total Package." Flair is such a stand-out that I can't even choose a second place finisher.

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): 1) Hulk Hogan - Without Hulk Hogan wrestling would not be as big as it is.

2) Ric Flair - He was the one that kept the NWA big time.

3) Roddy Piper - I think wrestling is lucky to have him back.

4) Barry Windham - He is a great babyface and an even better heel.

5) Kerry Von Erich - He is a great personality, but I would like to see him move to the big time like the NWA or the WWF.

SAM NORD (Walnut Creek, CA): 1) Ric Flair; 2) Hulk Hogan; 3) Randy Savage; 4) Roddy Piper.

Only four men deserve to be in contention for this award. Ric Flair has been the main man in the NWA throughout the decade, and enough has already been said about his ability in the ring. Hulk Hogan, Randy Savage, and Roddy Piper round out my votes more for impact on the business than for actual ability.

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Hulk Hogan - Nothing more needs to be said. 2) Ric Flair - The best wrestler. 3) Tiger Mask - Took everyone by storm. 4) Ricky Steamboat - For consistency over the complete decade. 5) Roddy Piper.

RANDY NORDQUIST (St. Paul, MN): 1) Ric Flair - The Nature Boy has been the core of the NWA for almost a decade and by far was the most entertaining person in the business. Runners up: Hulk Hogan, Nick Bockwinkel, Jerry Lawler and - for his consistent and remarkable improvement throughout the decade - Curt Hennig.

ALEX MARVEZ (Miami, FL): 1) Hulk Hogan. Ric Flair may be one of my favorite wrestlers and the most consistent over the past decade, but nobody will ever do for wrestling what the Hulkster did.

WALT MARSHALL (Morrisville, PA): 1) Hulk Hogan - Say what you want about Hulk... but he made wrestling what it is today (I give the credit to Vince McMahon, Roddy Piper, Cyndi Lauper, and of course the ego himself).

2) Ric Flair - Probably the best wrestler of the decade.

3) Bob Backlund - My personal favorite. Always tried to do his best. Always thought he was down for the count, but he always came back. True wrestler and deserves to be in the top list as wrestler of the decade.

4) Harley Race - Didn't really care for him but was darn good.

5) Ricky Steamboat - Another great wrestler, but to me he didn't have that much impact on the sport.

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) Ric Flair - He has it all; the best overall wrestler. 2) Ricky Steamboat - About the best technician. 3) Roddy Piper - Caused the most action in Georgia, Mid-Atlantic, Pacific Northwest, and the WWF. What else can you ask for? 4) Mil Mascaras - Is there a man with more talent than Mil Mascaras? 5) Bob Backlund.

JOHN McMULLEN (Haddonfield, NJ): I know everybody is going to choose Ric Flair, but the pick here is Ricky Steamboat. He has been on top for both promotions and in my opinion is the most talented wrestler of our time. 2nd, Ric Flair; 3rd, Ted DiBiase; 4th, Randy Savage; 5th, Terry Gordy.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): Over the last five years of being a fan, and the past ten years of video tape, I have enjoyed many excellent matches. Most of the greatest US matches that I've seen live or on tape have had one individual in them - w/Youngblood vs. Slaughter & Kernodle (1983), vs. Flair (1984 twice), vs. Blanchard (1984), vs. Savage (1985), vs. Valentine (1985), vs. Savage (1986 & 1987), vs. Flair (1989 four times), vs. Luger (1989 twice) - and in my opinion is also the epitome of a great character, for I know many casual and non-fans that go nuts for Rick Steamboat. He inspired my appreciation for the actual workrate of a match, helped broaden my interest in the business, and has been consistently a super performer throughout the decade. Therefore, Rick Steamboat is my pick for Wrestler of the Decade.

Close behind is Ric Flair, who has been a great performer consistently, but I think from 1985 to 1988, his matches were very much the same (although it was that damn booker's fault). He also has the best personality, but he never got over much as a heel when that was his job. He's a legend, but too much inconsistency makes him my number two pick.

I just have to mention Bruiser Brody as my number three pick. Almost everything that I've ever seen Brody in has been top notch - matches, angles, and interviews. The next decade will not forget Bruiser Brody.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Ric Flair - Whether there were 500 or 15,000 people in the arena, Flair gave 110%. Simply the best.

RON TRELSTAD (Eagan, MN): Two years ago, I couldn't see what the big deal with Flair was. But his matches with Steamboat, Sting, Funk, and Luger have proved him to be the best wrestler in the game.

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) Flair; 2) Brody; 3) Steamboat - One of the greatest athletes in wrestling history, super; 4) Piper - One of the all-time great personna's, especially as a heel; 5) Jerry Lawler - I considered many for this fifth spot - the last great regional wrestler, Lawler met practically everyone at one point or another in the decade (as his videos attest) and he remains a major name in the business at Decade's end.

TAG TEAM OF THE DECADE



1) THE ROAD WARRIORS	43.4%
2) THE FABULOUS FREEBIRDS	23.4%
3) THE MIDNIGHT EXPRESS	9.2%
4) THE BRITISH BULLDOGS	6.0%
5) TULLY BLANCHARD & ARN ANDERSON	5.4%
6) THE ROCK & ROLL EXPRESS	4.9%
7) STAN HANSEN & BRUISER BRODY	1.9%
8) THE FANTASTICS	1.3%
9) THE FABULOUS ONES	1.1%
10) JESSE VENTURA & ADRIAN ADONIS	1.0%
OTHERS	2.4%

JACK THOMPSON (Salt Lake City, UT): It seems to me the only two teams that even qualify, in terms of longevity: The Road Warriors and The Freebirds. The Freebirds, though, really weren't together for enough of the entire decade to qualify either, so by virtue of no opposition, my pick is - The Road Warriors.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): In my mind, The Road Warriors have had an impact since their debut in 1984. There are now many wrestlers who use the biker image, and there are more guys with faces painted than you can shake Mr. Fuji's came at.

The Freebirds are number two, and The Original Bolsheviks have put ten years of action and interviews into just ten months. I can't wait for their return.

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) The British Bulldogs - In their prime (early to mid-80's), easily the most talented team.

2) Stan Hansen and Bruiser Brody.

3) The Road Warriors - The tag team act of the decade - lose points with me for unintentionally spawning mediocre imitation teams/bodybuilders, lifters getting pushes based on size alone.

4) Freebirds.

5) Tully and Arn.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): The Road Warriors. The tag team every one wants to copy must be doing something right.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) The Freebirds made the most of every feud they ever came into and were lead faces in every territory they stayed in very long.

2) The Road Warriors changed the face of the game; they defined what the wrestler of the eighties (and the nineties) had to look like and work like to get over.

3) The Rock & Roll Express and 4) Midnight Expresses both had great runs as the best working tag team of the decade.

5) Brody & Hansen was actually the best wrestling team of the decade.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): The Road Warriors - Great gimmick with tremendous talent to match. Also most influential.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) The Road Warriors - Started the steroid monster craze in wrestling but still has been on top all decade.

2) The Freebirds - Were hot at the start of the decade, cooled off in the middle, and finished strong. Only problem now is Garvin just doesn't fit. Saw them live in December of 1980 at a packed Omni and have been a fan ever since.

3) Midnight Express - Although most liked the Eaton/Condry version better, I prefer Eaton/Lane. The ultimate team as far as actual wrestling goes.

4) The Rock & Roll Express - Had a two year run as the hottest thing going and always worked hard.

JOHN McMULLEN (Haddonfield, NJ): The Road Warriors because they changed the way people think of tag teams.

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): The Road Warriors. How many Road Warrior wannabees did this team inspire? By far not my favorite tag team, but definitely the most influential. Second place to The Rock & Roll Express, for the same reason.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) The Road Warriors - Hawk and Animal ushered in the era of the invincible musclemen as well as starting the widespread practice of war paint. Always dominant, with solid ring work and excellent interviews. The Warriors are one team I always make a point to watch.

2) Fabulous Freebirds - Always hot and the center of controversy wherever they happen to be working. The Freebirds have been involved in many classic matches and as we approach the nineties, they're still going strong.

3) Jim Cornette's Midnight Express - No matter which incarnation of the Express you see, they have combined hard work and Cornette's awesome interviews into an always entertaining package.

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): 1) The Road Warriors - They are the most awesome tag team ever. 2) Tully Blanchard and Arn Anderson - Tully is small but sneaky and Arn is powerful. 3) The British Bulldogs - For their high flying maneuvers. 4) The Steiners - They work well together and I like their amateur-style moves. 5) The Fabulous Ones - A great, quick, small team.

RON TRELSTAD (Eagan, MN): The Roadies were, and in some ways still are, the standard by which tag teams are measured.

ALEX MARVEZ (Miami, FL): Nobody changed the face of tag-teaming in the 1980's more than the Roadies. They have been the most popular tag team in the world over the past five years, have consistently improved as wrestlers, and give pretty good interviews. They are also responsible for the muscle-bound stiffies and face-paint in the sport today.

RANDY NORDQUIST (St. Paul, MN): 1) The Freebirds - The great Michael Hayes and Co. have kept their act entertaining with great interviews, good ringwork, and the ability to have an interesting feud with almost anyone. Runners-up: Ventura/Adonis, Road Warriors, High Flyers, Midnight Express.

RON WYATT (Suffolk, VA): The Road Warriors because they have done more to alter the face of wrestling than any performer to date.

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): The Road Warriors. The most exciting, skilled team to shine in both the AWA and NWA. Whether they held belts or not, Hawk and Animal had legions of fans as The Legion of Doom. Freebirds, Midnights, Bulldogs, and Wild Samoans follow.

MATCH OF THE DECADE

1) RICK STEAMBOAT VS RIC FLAIR (4-2-89)	14.8%
2) RIC FLAIR VS RICK STEAMBOAT (2-20-89)	12.4%
3) BOB BACKLUND VS JIMMY SNUKA (6-28-82)	11.5%
4) RICK STEAMBOAT VS RIC FLAIR (5-7-89)	10.9%
5) RICK STEAMBOAT VS RANDY SAVAGE (3-29-89)	6.8%
6) RIC FLAIR VS KERRY VON ERICH (5-4-84)	6.0%
7) SGT SLAUGHTER VS THE IRON SHEIK (6-16-84)	2.7%
8) HARLEY RACE VS RIC FLAIR (11-24-83)	2.5%
9) SGT SLAUGHTER VS PAT PATTERSON (81) 4-16	2.1%
10) THE IRON SHEIK VS HULK HOGAN (1-23-84)	2.1%
OTHERS	31.9%

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) Ric Flair vs. Kerry Von Erich (May 4, 1984): Kerry capturing the NWA crown was the culmination of the classic wrestling storyline and excellent match in all aspects.

2) WarGames I (July 4, 1987): My personal favorite. An innovative gimmick combined with great action made this an always memorable match.

3) Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat (May 4, 1989-WrestleWar 89): The most incredible two out of three falls match I have ever seen.

4) Randy Savage vs. Ricky Steamboat (March 29, 1989-Wrestlemania III): In my opinion the best worked match Titan has put on since I can remember.

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): Harley Race vs Ric Flair at Starrcade I. This was the passing of the torch from the wrestler of the seventies to the wrestler of the eighties.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Flair-Steamboat (pick the night - any should do). Great brawling, wrestling, aerial maneuvers, everything that wrestling SHOULD be.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Ric Flair versus Ricky Steamboat, April 2, 1989. There may have been better ones, but I didn't see them.

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) Two come to mind, though we could talk specific matches for days on end. This year's Flair-Steamboat match from Chi-Town Heat had everything - heat, great wrestling action, super call by Jim Ross - very memorable. 2) The Savage-Steamboat bout from Wrestlemania III - In the five years of Wrestlemania, this bout stands above the rest. Both guys had their working shoes on, in the shadows of the awe-inspiring Silverdome crowd. A rare classic match from Titan Sports.

RON TRELSTAD (Eagan, MN): Ric Flair vs Ricky Steamboat - No two men worked harder in their bouts than Flair and Steamboat. Steamboat and Savage at WMIII was by far the best Whiff match I've seen. Vince should go back and see what did right for a change.

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): Jerry Blackwell-Bruiser Brody lights out match at the St. Paul Civic Center. I was at this match and it was very exciting. They brought boards and chains to the ring.

2) Kerry Von Erich vs Jerry Lawler at Superclash III - It was bloody and long enough to be a great match.

3) Kerry Von Erich vs Ric Flair at Parade of Champions - I was happy to see Kerry win, but predictable.

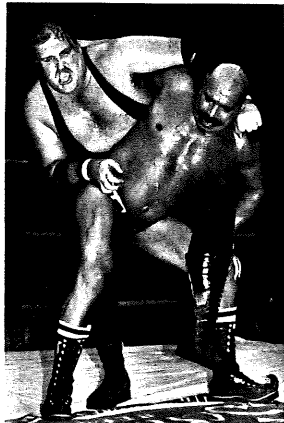
4) Lex Luger vs Ric Flair at Baltimore Bash 88.

5) Hulk Hogan vs Big Bossman in cage on SNME - This was the best cage match I ever saw. When they fell from the top of the cage that was great.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) The 12/25/82 match with Ric Flair versus Kerry Von Erich started the hottest territory ever in wrestling.

2) The 2/20/89 Ric Flair-Rick Steamboat match was the best wrestling match of the decade.

3) Rick Steamboat versus Randy Savage was the most watched and enjoyed major match.



JACK THOMPSON
(Salt Lake City,
UT): 1) Sgt.
Slaughter vs The
Iron Sheik bootcamp
bloodbath in MSG.
2) Shawn Michaels &
Marty Janetty vs
Buddy Rose & Doug
Somers bloodbath on
ESPN.

WALT MARSHALL (Morrisville, PA): 1) Bob Backlund vs. Jimmy Snuka - At MSG 6/82 in a cage where Snuka jumped off the top of the cage. Impressive. 2) Ric Flair vs. Rick Steamboat (WrestleWar); 3) Randy Savage vs. Rick Steamboat (WMIII); 4) Pat Patterson vs. Sgt. Slaughter in the 1981 alley fight; 5) Randy Savage vs. Ted DiBiase in the cage at MSG 7/88.

ALEX MARVEZ (Miami, FL): 1) Ric Flair vs. Ricky Steamboat (New Orleans Clash IX). I've never been glued to my television set more than during this match. Perfect execution and a babyface match that told a story. Both guys got their chance to shine, and a main event for the next pay-per-view show was set-up. Plus, there was a vast nationwide audience watching.

RANDY NORDQUIST (St. Paul, MN): 1) Ric Flair vs. Ricky Steamboat (New Orleans Clash VI). 2) Ric Flair vs. Kerry Von Erich (Parade of Champions III). 3) Bob Backlund vs. Jimmy Snuka (Madison Square Garden in the cage). 4) Randy Savage vs. Ricky Steamboat (Wrestlemania III). 5) Verne Gagne & Mad Dog Vachon vs. The Sheiks (St. Paul Civic Center).

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): 1) Don Muraco vs. Jimmy Snuka, steel cage match, MSG, 1983. I remember being in a club a couple of years ago with a bunch of non-wrestling types and Steve, a friend who did like wrestling. The video monitors went from classic cartoons to movies to news footage with nary a glance. But when Muraco-Snuka came on, Steve and I shouted our table into silence and screamed for the better part of fifteen minutes while our group blushed, embarrassed at our behavior. 2) Ric Flair vs. Ricky Steamboat, any from 1989. 3) Kerry Von Erich vs. Ric Flair, Texas Stadium, 1984. When Von Erich took the belt, it marked the height of World Class. 4) Bruno Sammartino vs. Larry Zbyszko, Shea Stadium, 1980. Interesting, the second steel cage match in my top five. 5) Hulk Hogan vs. Iron Sheik, MSG, 1984. I rank this one more for what it has meant historically for the genre than for actual grappling prowess.

MANAGER OF THE DECADE

1) BOBBY HEENAN	37.0%
2) JIM CORNETTE	31.8%
3) LOU ALBANO	9.2%
4) JIMMY HART	7.1%
5) PAUL E. DANGEROUSLY	4.5%
6) GRAND WIZARD	3.3%
7) FRED BLASSIE	2.6%
8) JAMES J. DILLON	2.4%
9) GARY HART	2.4%
10) KEVIN SULLIVAN	1.2%
OTHERS	0.9%



ALEX MARVEZ (Miami, FL): Jim Cornette. Bobby Heenan has been the most consistent, but Cornette established himself as both a great heel and babyface manager. His interviews are on a plane by themselves.

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Bobby Heenan. 2) Jimmy Hart - His Memphis work was so good, his latest WWF work doesn't work against him. 3) Jim Cornette - The only reason he's number three is because he virtually only managed The Midnight Express and didn't get anyone else over. 4) Lou Albano. 5) Gary Hart - He's always in the middle of the promotion he's in.

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) The Grand Wizard - He is missed. 2) Jim Cornette - The best talker. 3) J.J. Dillon - No one has better ringside presence. 4) Bobby Heenan - One of the best wits in the business. 5) Fred Blassie - "Pencil neck geek" is a part of our vocabulary.

TOM PRESTON (St. Paul, MN): 1) Paul E. Dangerously - Great talker, good troublemaker. 2) Bobby Heenan - The smartest manager out there. 3) Jim Cornette - A good, wimpy manager. I'm glad he turned back heel. 4) Gary Hart - Very nasty guy. 5) Diamond Dallas Page - Has potential to be best out there.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Bobby Heenan. Nothing can compare with his look of disgust when he or his men get caught cheating unless it's that smug look he has been they get away with it. Jimmy Hart might have gotten my vote except he's just too grating on my nerves.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): Bobby Heenan is still good after seven years of the same act, so he gets number one. The Jimmy Hart of Memphis was the best ever, but as far as the decade goes, he just makes number three. The only guy I can consider for number two is that Akbar fellow, but where is he? Cornette? He was great for five years. What the heck, give Cornette number two and kick Akbar out.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Jim Cornette - Colorful, funny, exciting.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): I put Jimmy Hart first because every manager who followed Hart in this decade that got a big push was essentially a variation of Jimmy Hart. This includes my number two pick, Jim Cornette, who was great as a heel, and my number four pick, Dangerously, who was great in every territory before he wore out his welcome. Mustn't forget Heenan at number three, because he was the most solid of the decade. Akbar gets fifth to me based on his early eighties work. I hated Albano and Blassie.

RON TRELSTAD (Eagan, MN): Bobby Heenan was the "Ultimate Weasel" where ever he appeared. He is the best at what he does. Capt. Lou Albano takes runner-up for his lock on tag team champions.

STEVE GENNARELLI: Bobby Heenan - For his durability throughout the decade - from regional bad guy to national pseudo-celebrity status, Heenan is something else. 2) Lou Albano - Writing off the second half of the decade, Lou cemented his place as one of the all-time great managers. 3 & 4) Fred Blassie and The Grand Wizard - Two who enjoyed limited success. Both would have played larger roles had certain variables permitted. 5) Gary Hart - After lots of hard work, finally getting a push in '89.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) Jim Cornette - His men have always been winners and his interviews are always memorable. Cornette works hard at ringside and his love of the business always shows through.

2) Bobby Heenan: The only man who comes close to Cornette. His interviews are solid and entertaining. The only thing that kept him from being number one is his work the last year. He tries hard but can't shake his "family" on his own.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Jim Cornette - The best at the mic, the funniest, and an all-around great guy. Thought by many to have one of, if not the, best wrestling mind in the business today. Should also be top choice for the nineties.

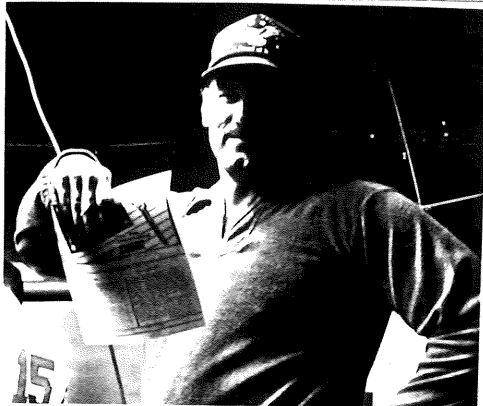
2) Jimmy Hart - Would have won if award had been only through 1985. His early eighties stuff from Memphis was classic but not enough mic time from Vince to continue to grow.

3) Bobby Heenan - Some people swear by him, but to me, he just does the same old routine over and over. It's okay for a while but it gets stale quickly.

4) Grand Wizard.

5) Freddie Blassie.

ANNOUNCER/COLOR COMMENTATOR OF THE DECADE



1) JESSE VENTURA	26.6%
2) JIM ROSS	17.6%
3) LANCE RUSSELL	13.7%
4) GORDON SOLIE	13.3%
5) VINCE MCMAHON	7.9%
6) GENE OKERLUND	5.4%
7) TONY SHIAVONE	3.7%
8) NICK BOCKWINKEL	2.4%
9) BOBBY HEENAN	1.5%
10) BRUNO SAMMARTINO	1.1%
OTHERS	6.8%

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Lance Russell - For almost the whole decade he was the announcer in more skits that I've kept on tape than anyone else. A classic at interviewing also.

2) Gordon Solie - The dean of announcers. Started the decade strong but ended up in a severe decline. Age and almost no exposure turned him into one big cliché.

3) Jim Ross - The announcer of the nineties. Last two years no one has come close.

4) Jesse Ventura - A classic color man who is great ribbing his straightman sidekick.

5) Bill Watts - During middle of the decade, the best color man around. His serious interviews could get you to believe almost anything.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) Gene Okerlund was so valuable that he was a "first round draft choice" along with Hulk Hogan when Vince fired the first shot in the Wrestling War of the Eighties.

2) Jim Ross was the best at calling a match, particularly in the UWF and Mid-South days.

3) Gordon Solie was best early in the decade.

4) Nobody gets his key points across more clearly or effectively than Vince McMahon.

5) Jesse Ventura was the best color commentator of the decade.

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): 1) Jesse Ventura - Tells it like it is. Has the guts to tell Vince to shut up.

2) Gene Okerlund - When he was in the AWA he was his best.

3) Bill Mercer - He made World Class fun to watch.

4) Gorilla Monsoon - I like it when he uses big words.

5) Vince McMahon - He's a jerk, but a good announcer.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Gordon Solie - Makes wrestling sound important rather than ridiculous.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) Jesse Ventura - A great talent and charismatic person who always "tells it like he sees it."

2) Jim Cornette - Although he hasn't been at it long, for a while he was the only reason to watch TBS.

3) Jim Ross - Another man whose love for the sport shines. Jim Ross could make just about any match exciting. Together with Cornette they are the most solid team in the business. Ross' memory of trivia is virtually astounding.

JIM RUSSELL (Jacksonville, FL): I grew up listening to him and one week is enough for the decade.

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) Jim Ross - I first heard him in '86 with the UWF. I enjoyed his manner then and he's since gotten better.

2) Vince McMahon Jr. - Make that the pre-1986 McMahon.

3) Gene Okerlund.

Color Men: 1) Jesse Ventura; 2) Bruno Sammartino - His presence in the booth gave credence to WWF broadcasts.

3) Lord Alfred Hayes - Forget McMahon - this is the true mastermind of Titan Sports. He appears to be a genuinely nice guy - his commentary is fine, it's just that no one takes him seriously. Blame it in "TNT."

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Jesse Ventura. I'll take him over any of the others anytime.

RANDY NORDQUIST (St. Paul, MN): 1) Gordon Solie - While I know many find him stale, I've found his ultra serious approach consistently entertaining, particularly given the many "tongue-in-cheek" skills who treat the business as a joke and talk down to the fans. Runners-up: Lance Russell, Mick Karch, Jim Ross, and Jesse Ventura.

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) Gordon Solie - Nobody even comes close to touching Gordon Solie so #2-5 are meaningless as no one has risen to his level.

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Lance Russell - For his work over the decade in Memphis. 2) Jim Ross - Had to replace Boyd Pierce in the Mid South and did a good job. 3) Jesse Ventura - No doubt number one in the WWF. 4) Bill Watts - Nobody could motivate for a match better. 5) Vince McMahon - No matter how much people hate him, he's still good at announcing.

RON WYATT (Suffolk, VA): Jim Ross - Get a collection of Mid-South/UWF tapes and you'll see why.

JOHN McMULLEN (Haddonfield, NJ): 1) Jesse Ventura; 2) Vince McMahon; 3) Tony Shavone; 4) Bob Caudle; 5) Gene Okerlund. What? No Jim Ross? Ross is the most overrated individual in the sport. His Southern drawl is one of the major reasons the NWA is thought of as a regional promotion.

ALEX MARVEZ (Miami, FL): 1) Lance Russell. This should be two separate categories because Jesse Ventura deserves some credit. Part of the decline in Memphis could be attributed to Lance's departure. A true professional in and out of the ring.

WALT MARSHALL (Morrisville, PA): Jesse Ventura is the best color commentator. Jim Ross is the best announcer. Tony Shavone will get my pick as announcer of 1989. Vince McMahon is the best announcer ever in getting over angles. Lance Russell is someone I can't stand, but he is good. Gordon Solie is the most boring announcer ever, but he gets my last spot.

FEUD OF THE DECADE

1) VON ERICHS VS FREEBIRDS	19.5%
2) HULK HOGAN VS PAUL ORNDORFF	9.6%
3) RIC FLAIR VS RICK STEAMBOAT	7.5%
4) BRUISER BRODY VS ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER	6.6%
5) RODDY PIPER VS JIMMY SNUKA	5.7%
6) HULK HOGAN VS RODDY PIPER	4.6%
7) HULK HOGAN VS RANDY SAVAGE	4.2%
8) TOMMY RICH VS BUSS SAWYER	3.9%
9) MIDNIGHT EXPRESS VS ROCK & ROLL EXPRESS	3.7%
10) BRUNO SAMMARTINO VS LARRY ZBYSZKO	3.3%
OTHERS	31.4%

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Buzz Sawyer vs. Tommy Rich - The blood along with the entire TBS scenario made this the best. 2) Freebirds vs. Von Erichs. 3) Patterson vs. Slaughter. 4) Flair vs. Steamboat. 5) Jerry Lawler vs Jimmy Hart - Resulting in Hart leaving town after Gilbert lost to Lawler. Hart went to the WWF.

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): 1) Bruno Sammartino vs. Larry Zbyszko. Last year, I asked my pal Paul's grandfather what wrestling match he remembered most from this decade and this was the one he came up with. "Everybody else is a pretender," he said concerning Bruno. 2) Roddy Piper vs. Jimmy Snuka. 3) Sgt. Slaughter vs. Iron Sheik. What a concept, wherever it went. 4) Jerry Lawler vs. Andy Kaufman. 5) Wahoo McDaniel vs. Manny Fernandez.

RANDY NORDQUIST (St. Paul, MN): 1) Hulk Hogan vs. Nick Bockwinkel - In spite of the inevitable screw-job finishes and Hogan's mediocre ability, their matches "rocked the house" like nothing I've seen before or since. Runners-up: Von Erichs-Freebirds, Flair-Funk, High Flyers/East-West Connection, and Savage-Hogan.

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) Ric Flair vs. Ricky Steamboat - The best matches of the decade. 2) Dusty Rhodes vs. The Four Horsemen - Brutal and one of the most enjoyable. 3) Freebirds vs. Ted DiBiase & Fuller & JYD & Steve O - The feud that got me involved in pro wrestling. 4) The Midnight Express vs. The Fantastics - Some of the best action ever in tag team match. 5) Buzz Sawyer vs. Tommy Rich - Pure brutality.

JOHN McMULLEN (Haddonfield, NJ): 1) Hulk Hogan vs. Roddy Piper put wrestling on the map. 2) Hulk Hogan vs. Paul Orndorff, what gates! 3) Ricky Steamboat vs. Ric Flair for technique. 4) Rick Steamboat vs. Randy Savage. 5) Roddy Piper vs. Jimmy Snuka for the coconut incident.

STEVE GENNARELLI: Hogan-Piper - The most intriguing feud of the Vince Jr. era. The force behind WMI's success and possibly Titan's survival as a whole. 2) Bruno-Zbyszko - Had the most heat of any feud I've witnessed this decade. 3) Flair-Steamboat - Should get a mention for this year alone, but this series had solid chapters throughout the decade.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) The Road Warriors vs The Russians: The first "real" challenge The Roadies ever faced produced many memorable matches, run-ins, and interviews on both sides.

2) Freebirds vs. Von Erichs: A true Texas classic. This one is what long term feuds are all about. All bookers of today and tomorrow should look to this feud for an idea on how to develop storylines.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) The Freebirds vs. The Von Erichs - The feud that would not die. Went on way too long but did have great matches and for a while made World Class the hottest promotion around.

2) Dusty Rhodes vs. Four Horsemen - I know Rhodes kept this feud going in order to keep himself on top, but it is still a good feud.

3) Tommy Rich vs. Buzz Sawyer - Another feud that wouldn't quit, but had great intensity and matches.

4) Rock & Roll Express vs. Midnight Express - What tag team feuds are all about.

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): 1) Magnum T.A.-Nikita Koloff - These guys seemed to hate each other so much. 2) Brody-Abdullah - Every one of their matches was a wild brawl. 3) Flair-Steamboat - They had some very intense matches. 4) Lawler-Von Erich - I didn't think that Lawler could act so nasty. 5) Flair-Funk.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Piper-Snuka - Wild, bloody brawls with unbelievable build-up and heat.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): There have been so many good ones! For pure excitement and interest, along with some of the greatest interviews ever, and involvement of most outside stars, the Rich & Idol vs. Lawler feud of 1987 gets my top pick. The Rock & Roll Express vs. The Midnight Express feuds of 1984 and 1986 combined get my number two pick. The third best was DiBiase vs Duggan from Mid-South... Hayes vs. Gordy was great, but should have never happened... Piper vs. Valentine... Flair vs. Steamboat (1989)... Slaughter vs. Patterson... the list goes on.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Steamboat vs Savage - Again, there may have been better, but this is the best of those I saw first hand. I could almost believe they wanted to kill each other.

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): Piper vs Snuka was important. Freebirds vs Von Erichs was the major feud that carried World Class through their best years. Four Horsemen vs Dusty Rhodes and his boys was the center of the NWA for a long time. I'm tempted to say Piper vs Snuka since the heat from this feud was so intense, they easily outshone Hogan during the early Titan expansion years, and many feuds evolved from this feud. However, for its longevity, making the Von Erichs more popular than they deserved, and making World Class one of the most watched promotions, the best feud was Freebirds vs Von Erichs.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): This is a tough one. The Freebirds and The Von Erichs filled arenas like no other feud until 2) Hogan and Orndorff. I picked the Freebirds/Von Erichs because they had much better wrestling and it was more interesting to me as well.

3) Tommy Rich vs Buzz Sawyer was so intense it burned both wrestlers out forever.

4) Hogan and Andre had two to three great gates.

GIMMICK OF THE DECADE



1) THE ROAD WARRIORS	33.7%
2) THE MILLION DOLLAR MAN	11.6%
3) PIPER'S PIT	9.1%
4) THE FOUR HORSEMEN	7.6%
5) HULK HOGAN & HULKAMANIA	5.8%
6) SGT. SLAUGHTER	4.6%
7) JIM CORNETTE'S MAMA'S BOY IMAGE	3.8%
8) RICK STEINER'S DUMB JOCK ACT	3.0%
9) NATURE BOY RIC FLAIR	2.8%
10) ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER	2.5%
OTHERS	10.2%

RANDY NORDQUIST (St. Paul, MN): 1) Hulk Hogan - Who would have thought Hulkamania would last into the 90's. Runner-ups: The Road Warriors, Missy Hyatt, "Hellfire Tommy Rich" with Mr. Donny.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): The Road Warriors changed the face of what this decade's wrestlers must look like, act like, and work like to get over. Their indestructible gimmick kills every territory they're in, too.

2) Flair's gimmick of the champion who will bend but not break won me over to make him appear the best wrestler.

3) Kamala cracked me up every time I saw him as did 4) "Gorgeous" Jimmy Garvin, after all, it wasn't his fault.

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): The face-painted, steroid muscle-headed Road Warriors.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): That muscle guy who's from the beach, plays guitar, and loves kids and his country has had the most impact ever. Hogan gets number one. Cornette's momma's boy wimp act gets number two. Ric Flair's gimmick of being a rich playboy is third.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): The Road Warriors - They brought forth an era of muscles, leather, and paint, but nobody does it better than Animal and Hawk.

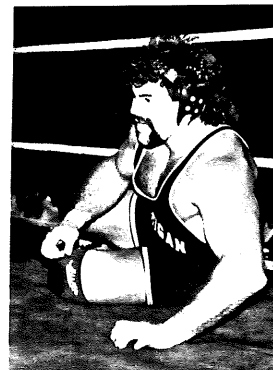
MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Abdullah the Butcher - The wildman from the Sudan was great at convincing people that he really is an out of control, blood thirsty, mad man.

2) The Road Warriors - The ultimate invincible monster tag team.

3) Ric Flair - Had the rich playboy who got everything he wanted including any woman down pat.

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): Rick Steiner - I like it when he play's dumb and his act with a girlfriend was fun. 2) Col. DeBeers - Causes a lot of heat with the fans. 3) Randy Savage. 4) Haku - As king he did very well. The best king. 5) Kevin Sullivan - When he was the devil worshipper he had a lot of great speeches.

JIM CORNETTE



RICK STEINER

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Jim Cornette's Mama's Boy act. 2) The Four Horsemen. 3) Adrian Adonis' gay gimmick - That was a great gimmick. It was going to happen sooner or later. 4) The Survivor Series gimmick. 5) The War Games gimmick - I had thought of it in the old Georgia days.

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5) The only WrestleRock was a super enjoyable aberration for Verne.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Starrcade 83: "A Flair for the Gold" - I have never been at any event where there was more electricity in the air. If Flair had not won the belt there would have been the riot to end all riots. In all honesty, the crowd reaction to Steamboat-Youngblood beating the Briscos was the loudest I've ever heard.

2) Wrestlemania III: Silverdome in 1987 - The crowd size says it all.

3) The First Crockett Cup: New Orleans Superdome 1986. There was so much talent there and so many matches in such a short period of time that I was burned out on wrestling for three weeks afterward.

Sam Nord (Walnut Creek, CA): 1) Wrestlemania III - Although the NWA is currently coming up with one great event after another, the interest just isn't there today. The sight of 93,000 fans at the Pontiac Silverdome at Wrestlemania III was truly awesome. As good as it sounds to hear, I don't think wrestling ever again will reach the popularity it had at Wrestlemania III.

WALT MARSHALL (Morrisville, PA): Wrestlemania I got all of the media attention and started the rebirth of WWF and pro wrestling.

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Wrestlemania III - The ultimate with 97,000 in attendance. 2) WrestleWar 89 - The best wrestling card. 3) Starrcade 83 - The original. Just a great card and the last of the total working together cards. 4) WWF Shea Stadium Card (Aug 80) - 47,000 people with Bruno vs. Zbyszko in a cage, Samoans vs. Pedro & Backlund, Inoki vs. Sharpe. 5) Night of Champions (May 84) - Ric Flair-Ricky Steamboat sixty minute draw at the Meadowlands. The NWA's return to the East.

RON WYATT (Suffolk, VA): Wrestlemania III - I hated it, but as a landmark, it was untouched.

JOHN McMULLEN (Haddonfield, NJ): 1) Wrestlemania III - I'll never forget the sight of 93,000 watching wrestling. 2) The Big Event (Toronto) - 65,000 fans is an incredible sight. 3) Wrestlemania I - Hogan & Mr. T vs. Piper & Orndorff. I can't consider the NWA PPV's as major events because of the empty seats and lack of interest by the public.

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) Starrcade '83 - It really was the first PPV/closed-circuit wrestling event that had any meaning. Not WMI. But Crockett let Vince get the upper hand; it's not always the inventor who profits most from an idea.

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) Hogan - Give the devil his due. As Rod Tronard once said "...There he is ...The Franchise."

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) Hulk Hogan - The one category in which no one can come close to Hogan. A true crossover star and proof that glitz over grit can sell in sports.

2) Sting: The only man who can possibly be the Hogan of the nineties. He has the build, the talent, and the charisma to be a megastar, as long as he is brought along slowly (but not too slowly).

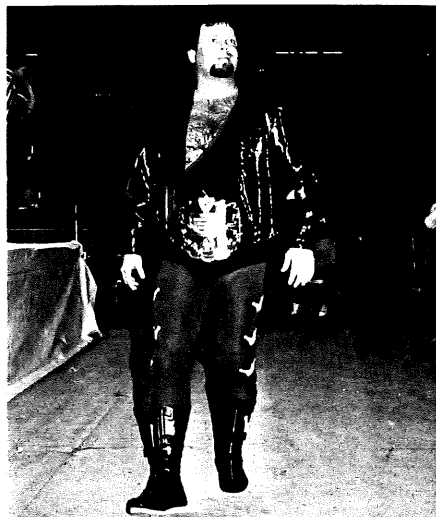
EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Ricky Steamboat - To the top in the WWF and NWA - quite an accomplishment. Here we're emphasizing the word best, not most popular as is Hogan's spot.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) What can one say about Hulk Hogan? He sold more tickets than any other wrestler ever. Maeda is well on his way to Hogan's level, and the most amazing thing about that is that it is all without television, but that's Japan.

2) The Ultimate/Dingo Warriors got as far as anyone has ever gotten into this business with so little talent.

3) Duggan was hot in the mid-eighties.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): Everything that can be said about Hulk Hogan has been said already. Number two could be Jerry Lawler as I've met many people from Tennessee who know of Lawler and like his personality very much. The Ric Flair babyface of 1983-1985, and 1989, gets my third pick.



JERRY "THE KING" LAWLER
#6 BABYFACE OF THE DECADE

JOHN McMULLEN (Haddonfield, NJ): 1) Hulk Hogan - No explanation necessary. 2) Ultimate Warrior - No talent, but boy is he over. 3) Dusty Rhodes - For the early eighties. 4) Sting - No push, extremely popular. 5) Superfly Snuka - In early eighties fans refused to boo him.

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Hulk Hogan. 2) Jim Duggan - For his Mid-South days. 3) Ric Flair - In his Mid-Atlantic days he was a God. Pre-Hulk Hogan in a sense. 4) Jerry Lawler. 5) Bill Watts - Still strong in 1987.

SAM NORD (Walnut Creek, CA): Hulk Hogan - I'm not going to vote for anyone but Hulk Hogan because there is no one in the eighties that had anywhere near the popularity Hogan did.

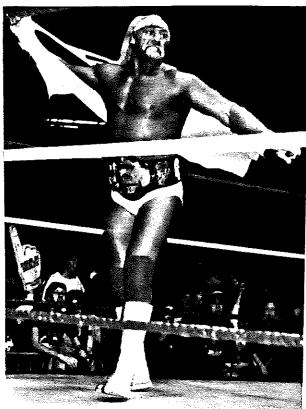
KLON (Mebourne, FL): Florida's own "Whitey," bouncer at the Anchor Club at Cocoa Beach and owner of Whitey's Gym in cocoa beach - Terry Bollea - until the Brisco Brothers came into his life. Hulk Hogan.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Hulk Hogan - He started the decade as a heel, but that's not how most fans know him. Like it or not, his is the most recognized name in professional wrestling.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Hulk Hogan - No other choice had a change. Has got it down to a science. 2) The Road Warriors - Best heat on a tag team in the decade. Would probably have been as big as Hogan if they went to the WWF. 3) The Rock & Roll Express - The ultimate teeny-bopper hearthrobs. 4) Kerry Von Erich - Brought fire to Texas.

BABYFACE OF THE DECADE

- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| 1) HULK HOGAN | 57.4% |
| 2) RICKY STEAMBOAT | 5.9% |
| 3) DUSTY RHODES | 4.0% |
| 4) KERRY VON ERICH | 3.8% |
| 5) STING | 3.8% |
| 6) JERRY LAWLER | 3.5% |
| 7) MAGNUM T.A. | 2.8% |
| 8) BOB BACKLUND | 2.8% |
| 9) THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR | 2.6% |
| 10) HAKSAW JIM DUGGAN | 1.9% |
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4) The first Wrestlemania had all the media attention and saved Vince McMahon from mega-failure.

5) The only WrestleRock was a super enjoyable aberration for Verne.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Starrcade 83: "A Flair for the Gold" - I have never been at an event where there was more electricity in the air. If Flair had not won the belt there would have been the riot to end all riots. In all honesty, the crowd reaction to Steamboat-Youngblood beating the Briscos was the loudest I've ever heard.

2) Wrestlemania III: Silverdome in 1987 - The crowd size says it all.

3) The First Crockett Cup: New Orleans Superdome 1986. There was so much talent there and so many matches in such a short period of time that I was burned out on wrestling for three weeks afterward.

Sam Nord (Walnut Creek, CA): 1) Wrestlemania III - Although the NWA is currently coming up with one great event after another, the interest just isn't there today. The sight of 93,000 fans at the Pontiac Silverdome at Wrestlemania III was truly awesome. As good as it sounds to hear, I don't think wrestling ever again will reach the popularity it had at Wrestlemania III.

WALT MARSHALL (Morrisville, PA): Wrestlemania I got all of the media attention and started the rebirth of WWF and pro wrestling.

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Wrestlemania III - The ultimate with 97,000 in attendance. 2) WrestleWar 89 - The best wrestling card. 3) Starrcade 83 - The original. Just a great card and the last of the total working together cards. 4) WWF Shea Stadium Card (Aug 80) - 47,000 people with Bruno vs. Zbyszko in a cage, Samoans vs. Pedro & Backlund, Inoki vs. Sharpe. 5) Night of Champions (May 84) - Ric Flair-Ricky Steamboat sixty minute draw at the Meadowlands. The NWA's return to the East.

RON WYATT (Suffolk, VA): Wrestlemania III - I hated it, but as a landmark, it was untouched.

JOHN McMULLEN (Haddonfield, NJ): 1) Wrestlemania III - I'll never forget the sight of 93,000 watching wrestling. 2) The Big Event (Toronto) - 65,000 fans is an incredible sight. 3) Wrestlemania I - Hogan & Mr. T vs. Piper & Orndorff. I can't consider the NWA PPV's as major events because of the empty seats and lack of interest by the public.

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) Starrcade '83 - It really was the first PPV/closed-circuit wrestling event that had any meaning. Not WMI. But Crockett let Vince get the upper hand; it's not always the inventor who profits most from an idea.

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) Hogan - Give the devil his due. As Rod Tronard once said "...There he is ...The Franchise."

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) Hulk Hogan - The one category in which no one can come close to Hogan. A true crossover star and proof that glitz over grit can sell in sports.

2) Sting: The only man who can possibly be the Hogan of the nineties. He has the build, the talent, and the charisma to be a megastar, as long as he is brought along slowly (but not too slowly).

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Ricky Steamboat - To the top in the WWF and NWA - quite an accomplishment. Here we're emphasizing the word best, not most popular as is Hogan's spot.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) What can one say about Hulk Hogan? He sold more tickets than any other wrestler ever. Maeda is well on his way to Hogan's level, and the most amazing thing about that is that it is all without television, but that's Japan.

2) The Ultimate/Dingo Warriors got as far as anyone has ever gotten into this business with so little talent.

3) Duggan was hot in the mid-eighties.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): Everything that can be said about Hulk Hogan has been said already. Number two could be Jerry Lawler as I've met many people from Tennessee who know of Lawler and like his personality very much. The Ric Flair babyface of 1983-1985, and 1989, gets my third pick.



JERRY "THE KING" LAWLER
#6 BABYFACE OF THE DECADE

JOHN McMULLEN (Haddonfield, NJ): 1) Hulk Hogan - No explanation necessary. 2) Ultimate Warrior - No talent, but boy is he over. 3) Dusty Rhodes - For the early eighties. 4) Sting - No push, extremely popular. 5) Superfly Snuka - In early eighties fans refused to boo him.

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Hulk Hogan. 2) Jim Duggan - For his Mid-South days. 3) Ric Flair - In his Mid-Atlantic days he was a God. Pre-Hulk Hogan in a sense. 4) Jerry Lawler. 5) Bill Watts - Still strong in 1987.

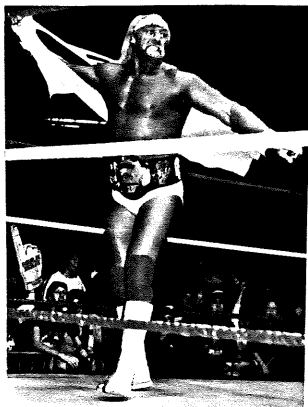
SAM NORD (Walnut Creek, CA): Hulk Hogan - I'm not going to vote for anyone but Hulk Hogan because there is no one in the eighties that had anywhere near the popularity Hogan did.

KLON (Mebourne, FL): Florida's own "Whitey," bouncer at the Anchor Club at Cocoa Beach and owner of Whitey's Gym in cocoa beach - Terry Bollea - until the Brisco Brothers came into his life. Hulk Hogan.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Hulk Hogan - He started the decade as a heel, but that's not how most fans know him. Like it or not, his is the most recognized name in professional wrestling.

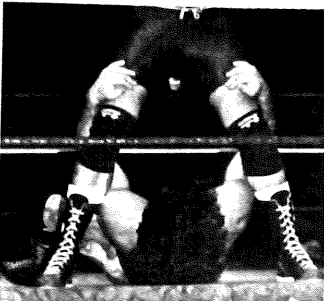
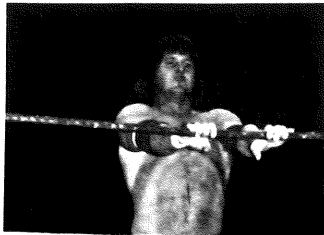
MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Hulk Hogan - No other choice had a change. Has got it down to a science. 2) The Road Warriors - Best heat on a tag team in the decade. Would probably have been as big as Hogan if they went to the WWF. 3) The Rock & Roll Express - The ultimate teeny-bopper hearthrobs. 4) Kerry Von Erich - Brought fire to Texas.

BABYFACE OF THE DECADE



- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| 1) HULK HOGAN | 57.4% |
| 2) RICKY STEAMBOAT | 5.9% |
| 3) DUSTY RHODES | 4.0% |
| 4) KERRY VON ERICH | 3.8% |
| 5) STING | 3.8% |
| 6) JERRY LAWLER | 3.5% |
| 7) MAGNUM T.A. | 2.8% |
| 8) BOB BACKLUND | 2.8% |
| 9) THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR | 2.6% |
| 10) Hacksaw Jim Duggan | 1.9% |
| OTHERS | 10.8% |

HEEL OF THE DECADE



- | | |
|--------------------|-------|
| 1) RODDY PIPER | 33.6% |
| 2) RIC FLAIR | 12.5% |
| 3) RANDY SAVAGE | 6.5% |
| 4) RICK RUDE | 5.1% |
| 5) ADRIAN ADONIS | 4.6% |
| 6) TED DIBIASE | 4.6% |
| 7) MICHAEL HAYES | 3.6% |
| 8) TERRY FUNK | 3.1% |
| 9) BRUISER BRODY | 2.4% |
| 10) KEVIN SULLIVAN | 2.2% |
| OTHER | 10.2% |

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): This was a tough one. When he was a heel, Roddy Piper was easily the best, but he was babyface a good part of the decade and also out of wrestling for a while. And because so many wrestlers turned during the decade, it's hard to think of wrestlers who were heels all ten years. Abby maybe, but he didn't do interviews. Brody was a great heel in the AWA. David Shultz was a great heel; in his short tenure in the AWA and WWF. Sentimentality again makes me name someone who was a heel all through the 1980's, was a very good wrestler who gave great interviews, and seemingly never cared what the fans thought, though his performance belied that: Adrian Adonis.

KLON (Melbourne, FL): Dey comes and dey goes but dat guy in de skirt is de best (Roddy Piper). (Ed Garea Salute.)

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) Piper; 2) Orndorff - Perfect rival/partner for Hogan. 3) Muraco - In his prime, a super all-around talent. 4) Savage; 5) Terry Funk.

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): 1) Bruiser Brody - He was the AWA; he was the nastiest guy I ever saw.

2) Ric Flair - People wanted to like him, but they wouldn't because who he hung out with.

3) Jesse Ventura - Whenever he would come back to the AWA, the fans would cheer him. Then he would do something to be booed.

4) Barry Windham - It's unbelievable how well he plays the heel after being such a great babyface.

5) Big Bossman - I like it when he handcuffs and beats his opponents.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) Michael Hayes was my number one just slightly ahead of Piper.

2) Piper was a face for virtually half the decade while Hayes was the lead heel in every promotion and rarely a face. Hayes's feuds drew better and were more fun and had more wrestling than Piper's feuds.

3) Flair was good as the lead heel of a promotion where the heels were always cheered more than the faces.

4) Sawyer in the early eighties and 5) Brody in Japan reached zeniths that the first three never hit.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): I am the type of fan that likes almost all of the heels in the business. However, one heel character that I've never liked was all of Rick Rude's heel act. I could never stand the guy in Memphis, World Class, Crockett, or Titan. Since I hated him so much, I have to say he's the best heel act of the decade. Number two goes to the old Roddy Piper of Georgia and his first two years in Titan. Third best is Tommy Rich of Memphis 1987.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) Ric Flair: So good at being bad it was almost impossible to hate him. 2) Eddie Gilbert: The best of the smaller circuit heels. I still feel he could have been the major heel force in the NWA today if given the chance. 3) Michael Hayes: Another match who is so good at being bad, it's great to watch. 4) Randy Savage: Titan's best bad guy.

JAMIE WARD (PA): 1) The Iron Sheik - Everyone hated him. Fans threw trash, chanted "USA", and gave him death threats. Even Flair never got that stuff. 2) Roddy Piper. 3) The Freebirds. 4) Kevin Sullivan - Truly a sick gentleman. 5) Ric Flair - The most popular heel of all-times.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Adrian Adonis - I know his gimmick was awful, but I loved to hate him.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Ted DiBiase - Based on the whole decade and doing it for so many different promotions, the hands down winner.

2) Michael Hayes - Another performer who did it for so long, for so many groups, and did it very well.

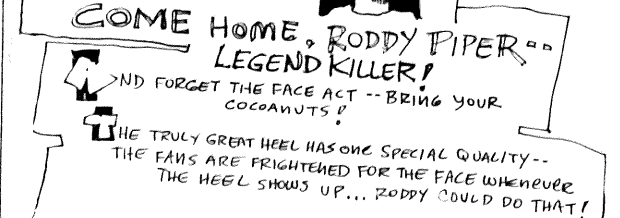
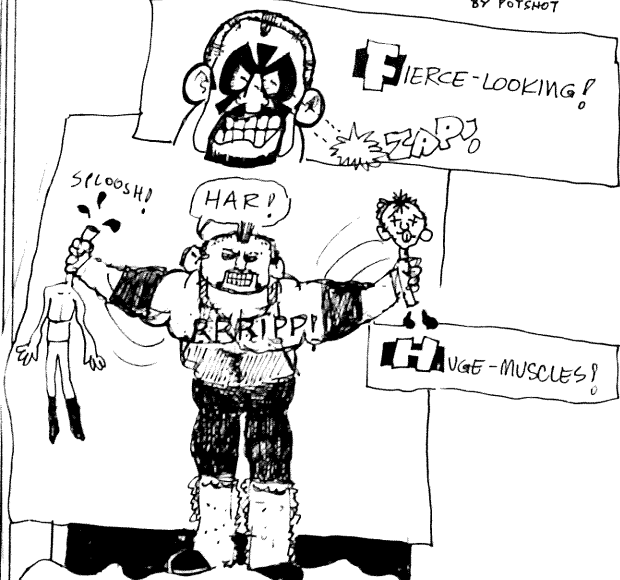
3) Abdullah the Butcher - No matter where he's been, he's been a killer heel.

4) Terry Funk - Always a good heel. His work early in the decade and this year (1989) give him a spot.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Ric Flair - Marks hated him and smart fans loved him. Guess that means he did his job well.



WHAT MAKES A GREAT HEEL?
BY POTSHOT



PROMOTION OF THE DECADE

1) WORLD WRESTLING FEDERATION	54.4%
2) NATIONAL WRESTLING ALLIANCE	15.0%
3) UNIVERSAL WRESTLING FEDERATION	12.9%
4) GEORGIA CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING	8.0%
5) WORLD CLASS CHAMPIONSHIP/USWA	3.2%
6) MID-ATLANTIC WRESTLING	2.4%
7) MEMPHIS/CWA	2.1%
8) AMERICAN WRESTLING ASSOCIATION	1.3%
9) CALGARY STAMPEDE WRESTLING	0.2%
10) CONTINENTAL CHAMPIONSHIP WRESTLING	0.2%
OTHERS	0.3%

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): 1) Hulk Hogan - People just love the guy, and he loves them back.

2) Ricky Steamboat - I can't imagine him ever being a heel.

3) Dusty Rhodes - I think most people like him.

4) Ultimate Warrior - He isn't the greatest wrestler, but people have taken to him very well.

5) Sting - People get excited when he comes to the ring.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): NWA - Once great and seemingly returning to greatness.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): I really can't pick a winner as I don't feel Titan (who was most successful of the decade) promotes wrestling and no else stood out.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) The promotion they gave me most enjoyment this decade was Bill Watts' Mid-South/UWF. Great action, performers, and interviews. For a while this group had it all.

2) Before they got power hungry the Crockett's Mid-Atlantic group was a close second. In fact their talent in 1982 and 1983 was as good as a group as I can remember.

3) WWF - You have to give McMahon a place somewhere on the list just for all the money he made.

4) Memphis was a hot group up until this year. Maybe it's just a coincidence that this group started to really smell once Lance Russell left. Early in the decade this place really was a training ground for talent.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) I put the WWF first because they have forced a change in how all fans, especially the casual fans, view wrestling.

2) Bill Watts' UWF is my favorite promotion of the decade, but it failed economically, so I would actually rate it behind All-Japan and New-Japan.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): WWF - You don't know whether you like wrestling or not until you've watched it. Vince gets people to watch.

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) WWF 84-85 - Those were exciting days - purists were already mad at McMahon for his changes. But those early years now seem like Maeda's UWF in comparison to the total cartoon of today's Titan.

2) Watt's UWF (mid-1980's) - A great weekly TV show. It consisted of constant angles, good wrestling action, good wrestling violence - It's a shame to see a DiBiase going to waste now after seeing him in the old UWF.

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) NWA - Despite all of the changes in the organization, the inside battles, the destruction of Florida and the UWF, and all the other things that the NWA did wrong... The NWA has consistently presented the best cards, wrestling, and action of the big three (really two now). So really we're talking about Georgia/Mid-Atlantic/Florida into Crockett into Turner.

2) World Class (NWA) - It was great and where Vince got the ideas for the WWF and Fritz destroyed himself and his boys.

3) UWF - Boy, was it hot. I can't give the WWF anything because of the damage it has done when compared to the product it has put out in return. The AWA destroyed and continues to destroy itself.

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): 1) WWF. Once the territoriality was broken, "anything goes" became the word. 2) NWA. What Dusty and George Scott could not destroy, Jim Herd and Ric Flair just might, but not in this decade. 3) World Class. The USWA stumbles along, but I can remember the early part of the decade. 4) AWA. Until Verne lost the rest of his marbles. 5) Stampede. Best for man-for-man as far as talent goes.

SAM NORD (Walnut Creek, CA): 1) NWA; 2) WWF; 3) UWF; 4) Memphis (CWA).

The NWA gets first providing the most memorable matches of the decade. For its success I can't place the WWF any lower than two. The American UWF provided great action, as did the CWA before it was given that name.

BEST TALKER OF THE DECADE



LARRY ZBYSZKO
#9 TALKER OF THE DECADE

1) RODDY PIPER	26.1%
2) RIC FLAIR	21.8%
3) JIM CORNETTE	13.5%
4) TERRY FUNK	6.4%
5) BOBBY HEENAN	5.0%
6) JERRY LAWLER	4.8%
7) MICHAEL HAYES	4.6%
8) BRUISER BRODY	3.7%
9) LARRY ZBYSZKO	2.8%
10) RANDY SAVAGE	2.1%
OTHERS	9.2%

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): 1) Ric Flair - I enjoy his interviews very much. 2) Hulk Hogan - He can talk about anything in his interviews and make sense of it. 3) Larry Zbyszko - It's great when he talks about LarryLand 4) Terry Funk - When he was in the WWF, he didn't do many interviews so I didn't realize he was as good as he is. 5) Dusty Rhodes - He is very funny when he talks.

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): Let's see. Stan Hansen, Roddy Piper, Ric Flair, Jim Cornette, Adrian Adonis, Bobby Heenan, Arn Anderson, Randy Savage, Terry Funk. For consistency, I'll go with Piper.

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): Bobby Heenan's "show" almost knocked him off of my list for sheer abrasiveness.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Jim Cornette had made he laugh more than anyone and he's smart enough to keep coming up with new material so he never gets stale.

2) Ric Flair - Had one spell of about two years where he was a little stale but constantly a great interview for all ten years.

3) Roddy Piper - Always a good rapper.

4) Jerry Lawler - For the whole decade he has kept himself on top with a lot of help from his mouth.

5) Dusty Rhodes - Give the devil his due; he could always talk with the best of them.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): Interviews have played a bigger part in wrestling in the second half of the decade than in the first half. My top five picks (or guys I used to always repeat around the house) are Ric Flair, Tommy Rich (heel), Jim Cornette, Arn Anderson, and Downtown Bruno.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) Ric Flair: A true story in class whenever he had the interview podium to himself. He's always interesting to listen to.

2) Bruiser Brody: Classic interviews. What more can you say?

3) Roddy Piper: When he can be stopped from screeching he is one of the most entertaining around.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) Jerry Lawler had the best normal person voice (along with Bockwinkel) and always sounded to me like a real person doing a wrestling interview.

2) Terry Funk had the funniest interviews of the decade and I repeat more of his lines than anyone.

3) Jim Cornette was great as a rapid-fire mouthpiece.

4) Ric Flair was great until he became stale in 86-88, but recovered after his turn.

5) Ted DiBiase in the Mid-South, UWF, and in WWF was always excellent and creative.

SAM NORD (Walnut Creek, CA): 1) Roddy Piper; 2) Jim Cornette; 3) Terry Funk; 4) Jake Roberts; 5) Larry Zbyszko.

Although he is only my fourth pick, I want to give some recognition to Jake Roberts. Looking back at the eighties you have to consider him a major star. It wasn't his wrestling ability that got him over. It was his interviews that made fans think he was a great wrestler.

BIGGEST SHOCK OF THE DECADE

1) THE BRUISER BRODY MURDER	47.6%
2) STAYING POWER OF THE WWF	5.5%
3) BOB BACKLUND'S LOSS TO THE IRON SHEIK	4.8%
4) ADRIAN ADONIS' CAR ACCIDENT DEATH	4.1%
5) BILL WATTS SELLING THE UWF TO JIM CROCKETT	4.1%
6) THE WWF APPEARING ON TBS INSTEAD OF THE NWA	3.8%
7) MAGNUM T.A.'S CAR ACCIDENT	3.4%
8) DUSTY RHODES SIGNS WITH THE WWF	3.1%
9) ANDRE THE GIANT PINS HULK HOGAN ON NBC	2.6%
10) RON GARVIN WINNING NWA TITLE FROM RIC FLAIR	2.6%
OTHERS	13.6%

JAMIE WARD (PA): 1) Bob Backlund's loss to The Iron Sheik. 2) Ric Flair losing to Ron Garvin. 3) Nikita Koloff turning babyface. 4) The WWF appearing on TBS on "Black Saturday." 5) Hulk Hogan pinning Andre the Giant.

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): 1) Andre "pins" Hogan. The high point of hysteria was reached in 1988 on the prime-time "Main Event." The dueling Hebners (never mentioned again) and the sight of three World Champions in the ring together in the span of twenty seconds was one of the best concealed and maneuvered happening ever.

2) Piper hits Snuka with coconut.

3) Kerry Von Erich pins Ric Flair. World Class never attained more stature than this.

4) Dusty Rhodes' move to the WWF. After all the bitter words, the bottom line was money and a job.

5) Lanny Poffo turns heel. We watched this one on TV. In Madison Square Garden, Poffo came out to read a Wrestlemania V poem. He favored Savage against Hogan to retain the belt, which the crowd booed. Instead of flinging his frisbee into the audience, he teased them and kept it. My friend, Des, turned to us and said, "That's the first time I ever saw someone go bad by reading a poem."

STEVE GENNARELLI: There were many throughout the decade, but the one that sticks out in my mind is that July '88 morning, eating breakfast, and reading about the death of Adrian Adonis and his colleagues. I had a day off that day and thoughts of Adrian were with me the whole day. A super wrestler.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) The needless murder of Bruiser Brody wins hands down. 2) Vince McMahon buying Georgia Championship Wrestling in July 1984. 3) Vince McMahon buying out Paul Boesch in 1987. 4) The Crocketts buying out Bill Watts in 1987.

RON DOBRATZ (Roscoe, IL): 1) Learning that Kerry Von Erich had his foot amputated. 2) Observing the success and acceptance of Jose Gonzales murdering Bruiser Brody. 3) Bill Watts selling his promotion (UWF) to the NWA and Dusty Rhodes not taking advantage of the talent he acquired.

JACK THOMPSON (Salt Lake City, UT): 1) Brody's murder; 2) Arn and Tully going to Titan; 3) Vince's success; 4) The demise of the AWA as a "Big 3" promotion; 5) Madusa Micelli.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Bob Backlund's sudden title loss.

JOSEPH LILLY (Baltimore, MD): I'll never forget where I was when I found out that Bruiser Brody had been murdered in Puerto Rico... come to think of it, I'll also never forget where I was when I heard that Ron Garvin won the most prestigious prize in wrestling! Third goes to Mike Von Erich's death.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): The murder of Bruiser Brody (and for the handling of it in Puerto Rico, it also wins the biggest outrage and miscarriage of justice of the decade.)

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) Emergence of the WWF as the Number One National US Promotion - I never thought Vince would make it. I thought Hogan would burn out (and he really did in the late-1984-early 1987 days) but Vince's emphasis on marketing rather than wrestling proved to be the correct road to follow.

2) I suppose one could foresee some wrestler someday getting killed due to the business, but when it actually happened, I was as shocked as they come.

3) The way Crockett/Rhodes ripped the UWF from underneath Bill Watts was the worst in-ring decision that the NWA could have made, and I hated it to boot.

BEST PROMOTER OF THE DECADE:

1) VINCE MCMAHON	61.8%
2) BILL WATTS	14.8%
3) JIM CROCKETT JR.	4.0%
4) JERRY JARRETT	3.4%
5) VERNE GAGNE	3.4%
6) PAUL BOESCH	3.1%
7) EDDIE SHARKEY	3.1%
8) FRITZ VON ERICH	2.5%
9) VINCE MCMAHON SR.	1.5%
10) DON OWENS	1.2%



VERNE GAGNE #5 PROMOTER OF THE DECADE

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) If Japan was in the running, I would give number one to Giant Baba who was honest and caring. "A handshake from Baba was worth more than any other promoters signed contract" is what I've heard often about him. Unlike so many ex-wrestler bookers, he alone knew when to take himself out of the limelight. Number one in the US scene is Vince McMahon who has to be praised for bringing wrestling to a larger audience, and sometimes it even is wrestling!

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): Unfortunately, Vince McMahon.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Vince McMahon for monetary results - not for quality.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): Vince McMahon because he made everyone else look like jackasses.

STEVE GENNARELLI: 1) Vince McMahon for success alone; 2) Bill Watts - Fondly remembered for his hard hitting UWF.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): Bruiser Brody: The ultimate brawler. I can't bring myself to disrespect him by nominating any of the other fine talents around. Brody truly stood head and shoulders above the rest.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): Vince McMahon: Although I don't think he promotes wrestling as much as he promotes cartoon characters, you can't argue with his success in mainstreaming the sport.

BEST BRAWLER OF THE DECADE

1) BRUISER BRODY	61.5%
2) STAN HANSEN	15.2%
3) TERRY GORDY	5.5%
4) ABDULLAH THE BUTCHER	2.0%
5) TERRY FUNK	2.0%
6) HACKSAW JIM DUGGAN	2.0%
7) RODDY PIPER	1.8%
8) JERRY LAWLER	1.8%
9) BARRY WINDHAM	1.3%
10) BUZZ SAWYER	1.3%
OTHERS	5.6%

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): Gordy, Hansen, and Brody come to mind. Roddy Piper is an underrated brawler. But my heart says Brody.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Bruiser Brody, maybe of all-time.

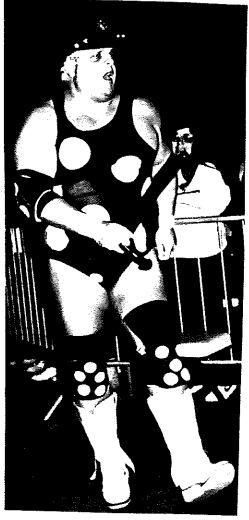
STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) What can you say about Bruiser Brody? I think he defined the wrestling brawler the best. Really, though, he and 2) Stan Hansen were very similar. Both knew enough never to let things bog down into just a tough-guy contest or a punching match. They never forgot to throw in holds, dropkicks, and the like.

3) Jerry Lawler and 4) Eddie Gilbert came up with some of the most realistic brawls throughout the decade, and their size never kept the fans from believing.

RON TRELSTAD (Eagan, MN): Whenever Brody wrestled someone was going to get a thrashing and a butt whuppin'. There was never a dull moment in his bouts. Buzz Sawyer was the same way with a tad more viciousness involved.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Bruiser Brody - No one did it better and he was still doing it when he died. 2) Stan Hansen - He was always a good brawler. 3) Terry Gordy will probably be the winner in the nineties.

LEAST FAVORITE PERSONALITY OF THE DECADE



- | | |
|-------------------------|-------|
| 1) DUSTY RHODES | 16.1% |
| 2) VINCE MCMAHON | 13.8% |
| 3) HULK HOGAN | 7.7% |
| 4) VERNE GAGNE | 4.5% |
| 5) JIM DUGGAN | 4.3% |
| 6) THE VON ERICH FAMILY | 3.7% |
| 7) DAVID CROCKETT | 3.4% |
| 8) GEORGE STEELE | 2.8% |
| 9) RICKY MORTON | 2.7% |
| 10) JOHN STUDD | 2.3% |
| OTHERS | 31.7% |

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): 1) I hated all gimmicks where the wrestler underneath was no wrestler. The mental retard gimmick of George Steele, 2) the freak gimmick of Andre the Giant, 3) and everything about the Sheik of Araby made me switch channels. Based on the last sentence, you would think 4) the Iron Sheik would not be so high on the list, but everything he did except the last MSG Boot Camp Match with Sgt. Slaughter bored me to tears. 5) Paul Jones selection is obvious.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): Vince McMahon - greed personified.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Superstar Billy Graham. I disliked him as a wrestler. I hated him as a manager. I detested him as commentator. Three strikes and you're out.

TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): Mitch Snow, Spike Huber, Ricky Rice, Jack Victory, and John Tatum.

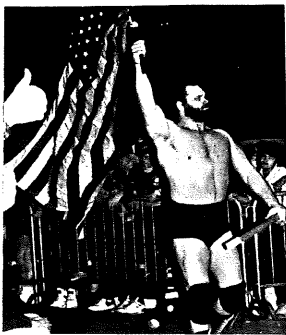
JACK THOMPSON (Salt Lake City, UT): Ed Whalen, Jim Crockett, Marc Lowrance, Ricky Morton, and Bobby Backlund.

STEVE GENNARELLI: As Andre calls him Jigsaw Duggan. Just a loud gross guy. Very little talent if any - his repertoire consists of the Ed McMahon "Hey-oh" and 2x4 to the head. Seeing Sherri plunge onto this idiot twice was a great moment in sports, and life in general. 2) Steve Williams, like Duggan, but conditioned. A real meathead who I'm sure was a whiz as a heavyweight amateur but lacks the personality and skill to be a good pro. 3) Eric Embry - A bigger ego than the two previous lugs, but at one-half the size. 4) Stan "Uncle Elmer" Frazier - I'd like to see Kamala jump from a cage onto this guy continuously.

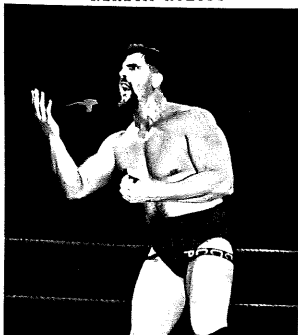
JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1,2,3,4,& 5) The Von Erich Family. Take your pick and chose your order.

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): Eric Embry is my knee-jerk first choice, though he's been nauseating me for only the past year or so; Percy Pringle likewise. It's tempting to say Dusty Rhodes for his destroying of the NWA and the UWF. I'm trying to think of the one wrestler who would most likely make me turn off the TV during the eighties. Nikita Koloff, I guess. Eddie Sharkey should have flunked him and made him stay in camp another year. His Russian accent was like fingernails on a blackboard. And when Terry Taylor lost to him, that was the last straw.

HACKSAW DUGGAN #5 DISLIKED



NIKITA KOLOFF



ALEX MARVEZ (Miami, FL): Dusty Rhodes. I still think Hulk Hogan is a great role model for kids. What is Dusty?

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): 1) Dusty Rhodes - Talk about a man who overstayed his welcome. Sorry, Dusty, but whatever you might have achieved by 1980, you only spoiled by hanging around through the decade in deplorable condition with lousy matches. 2) Brother Love. 3) Ultimate Warrior. 4) Captain Lou Albano (post-WWF). 5) Tito Santana - Whatever amount of personality he has can be measured on the head of pin.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): 1) Hulk Hogan - A lack of wrestling ability, repetitive interviews, and an ego the size of Dusty Rhodes' refrigerator combine to make Hogan number one on my hit parade.

2) Dusty Rhodes - The fat man does have charisma, some ability to wrestle and to talk, but has to realize some day that the people don't love him nearly as much as he loves himself.

3) Vince McMahon - The promoter who makes me most embarrassed to be a wrestling fan.

WORST CHANGE OF THE DECADE

- | | |
|---|-------|
| 1) THE DEMISE OF TERRITORIES | 27.0% |
| 2) THE WWF'S CIRCUS ATTITUDE | 26.5% |
| 3) PAY PER VIEW/RELIANCE ON THE BIG EVENT | 13.4% |
| 4) HIGHER TICKET PRICES | 11.3% |
| 5) LOWER EMPHASIS ON PURE WRESTLING | 9.8% |
| 6) ELIMINATION OF TWO OUT OF THREE FALL MATCHES | 7.5% |
| 7) WAR BETWEEN PROMOTIONS | 2.3% |
| 8) LACK OF MOVEMENT OF WRESTLERS BETWEEN AREAS | 2.1% |
| 9) LESS BLOOD IN MATCHES | 0.7% |
| 10) ROLL OF DIMES ZBYSZKO GAVE HENNIG VS BOCKWINKEL | 0.1% |

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): The rapid rise of ticket prices. This is followed closely by the disappearance of wrestling from smaller arenas and the thirty second squash match.

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): The bigger-is-better-take-your-steroids-if-you-want-to-be-successful philosophy that has taken over wrestling. If Titan had robbed all the talent and put on good house shows emphasizing working and wrestling rather than five to ten minute matches where the wrestlers trade clotheslines (the second worst change), hard-core fans would not be decrying the death of one-promotion towns and the small circuits.

JOSEPH LILLY (Batimore, MD): 1) The late Adrian Adonis' change in gimmick from leather to lace, along with his health and condition. 2) The workrate of Greg Valentine. 3) The roll of dimes that Curt Hennig used to knock out Nick Bockwinkel for the AWA World Title. 4) The prestige of the AWA World Title. 5) The AWA.

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): 1) Reliance on Big Events - It used to be that wrestling went along, with big matches happening whenever a feud reached fruition. Now, feuds are timed to coincide with scheduled PPV's and televised money events. It's a sad commentary when the WWF considers the recent Demolition tag-team belt victory against the Brainbusters a "gift" to those who regularly watch the syndicated shows.

2) Independents Withier - This is the result of the nationalization of the WWF and other "major leagues," like NWA on TBS and even the AWA on ESPN. Now fewer wrestlers make a living.

3) De-Emphasis on Ability - This is just what might have been the poorest decade for authentic wrestling talent. High spots are great, but what good is champion like Ultimate Warrior when he can barely move? Andre versus Hogan for the belt? Andre versus Warrior?! This is robbing the public blind and even the marks don't go after this kind of deception for long.

4) Limited Sense of History - Yeah, every time Lex Luger or Ric Flair fight, the commentators relate how many times they've held their belts. But have you ever heard the names of the men whom they beat? Ever hear Ron Garvin's name in the NWA? I know promotions don't like to plug each other, but it robs younger fans a chance to appreciate the larger perspective.

5) Lawsuits - Inevitable considering the face of the business, but it was despicable watching Inside Edition covering the Rhodes-Disalvo trial as big news.

RON DOBRATZ (Roscoe, IL): The virtual disappearance of two-out-of-three fall matches. 2) The increase in number of matches, resulting in too many very short bouts. 3) The lack of movement of wrestler between promotions, resulting in less variety of match-ups. 4) Unwillingness of wrestlers to lose falls by concession.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Troy, NY): The popularity of Vince McMahon's brand of gimmick laden, overblown circus style of wrestling. Thank god for the NWA and here's hoping they don't change.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) The decline in the number of territories. This makes it harder to develop talent and with no talent trading wrestlers get stale. 2) Vince McMahon sabotaging his competition.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): WWF's new era - all that wasted talent. Criminal.

STEVE GENNARELLI: The de-emphasizing of Wrestling in Pro Wrestling. Seeing a good wrestling match at your arena or on free TV isn't as easy as it used to be.

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) Vince's blatant racism portrayed on over two hundred television stations in syndication every week and NBC's disgraceful compliance by allowing it to appear on SNME. 2) Vince's destruction of smaller circuits.

RANDY NORDQUIST (St. Paul, MN): 1) The demise of territories/Rise of the WWF. 2) Emphasis on size as opposed to athletic ability. 3) Concept of sports entertainment. 4) End of Georgia Championship Wrestling. 5) The decline of the AWA.

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): The emergence of newsletters.

RON DOBRATZ (Roscoe, IL): 1) The increased accessibility of televised wrestling shows and reading material for fans. 2) Wrestling becoming acceptable entertainment in the eyes of more of the general public. 3) An ever-increasing variety of gimmick matches.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Pay-per-view. How else could I see a meqacard from South Carolina? How else could you see one from Atlantic City.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): NWA's recent "we wrestle" policy.

STEVE GENNARELLI: For the fan, the best change is the upgraded production of the TV shows. Compare our shows now with the weekly hours from '79. TV wrestling is comparable with the look of other sports. We have graphics, slow-mo, many camera angles, videos, teams of announcers. If I was asked this question two or three years ago, I would have answered regarding the improved image of pro wrestling in society. At that time, wrestling was somewhat acceptable. Now it's (WWF) a glorified kids show. Occasionally you'll see Flair and Funk get a mention on a national sports show because of fans like Muster and Essiason. But wrestling is again considered embarrassing.

BEST CHANGE OF THE DECADE

1) EXPANDED SYNDICATION AND CABLE WRESTLING TV	29.5%
2) PAY-PER-VIEW EVENTS	21.5%
3) EMERGENCE OF NEWSLETTERS	17.5%
4) WIDER PUBLIC ACCEPTANCE OF WRESTLING	7.6%
5) DUSTY RHODES LEAVING THE NWA	3.8%
6) INCREASING INTERVIEW QUANTITY AND QUALITY	2.3%
7) WRESTLERS BECOMING BETTER ATHLETES	1.2%
8) TED TURNER PURCHASES THE NWA	1.1%
9) WIDESPREAD TOURS OF THE UNITED STATES	1.0%
10) VARIETY OF GIMMICK MATCHES	1.0%
OTHERS	13.5%

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) All the wrestling on TV has given us junkies a chance to see anything we want to see. 2) Big PPV shows - In the past you had to travel if you wanted to see the big shows. I still travel to most, but still have the option to watch at home if I want.

RANDY NORDQUIST (St. Paul, MN): 1) Pay-per-view. 2) Turner's purchase of the NWA. 3) Use of music for entrances. 4) Availability of inside news through the sheets. 5) Wade Keller begins publishing "The Torch."

PAUL MacARTHUR (Camillus, NY): 1) Pay-per-view - The most important from a revenue standpoint. 2) Sheets (Newsletters) - The most important from an honesty standpoint. 3) Ted Turner's acquisition of the NWA - Although too soon to tell what the end result will be, I have to agree with Eddie Elner's prediction that Terrible Ted, in time, will bring a level of integrity and class to the senior circuit that will make Vince sick. Plus Ted's deep pockets could be just enough to help maintain a strong enough talent base to appeal to the lowest common denominator and it will take years before such a changing of the guard is possible. 4) Supercards - Be they PPV or not.

JEFF COHEN (Flushing, NY): 1) Advent of Pay-Per-View. Okay, earlier I wrote that in the good old days, feuds culminated whenever they wore down to a finale. Now, numerous feuds are geared for higher exposure climaxes which make for spectacular supercards. The public remembers these and buys videotapes of them. This new outlet has kept the NWA going at a time when they would have lost \$20 million instead of \$10 million without its superior PPV events.

2) Superstations - Again, what killed the smaller federations is good for the casual fan, who can scan fifty channels and catch four or five promotions who have coverage.

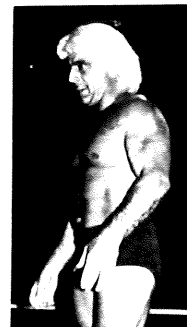
3) Better Production Values - The slick nature of the WWF has rubbed off. Anything else looks chinzy, which thwarts local promotions, but makes the top ones appear to be "major leagues."

4) Fewer Title Belts - The abolition of the US Tag Team and Western States Heritage belts have given more character to the titles in the NWA. The creation of either Intercontinental Tag Team of TV Titles in the WWF would be a horrible mistake.

5) Newsletters - Necessary for the real fan to see the underside of the business. So Verne thinks "Brody got what he deserved?" This little gaff will cost Gagne my box office dollars for anything he may ever do. And I'm not an isolated case.

PERSONAL FAVORITE OF THE DECADE

1) RIC FLAIR	23.4%
2) RODDY PIPER	14.5%
3) BRUISER BRODY	7.0%
4) HULK HOGAN	6.6%
5) TED DIBIASE	3.5%
6) CURT HENNIG	3.3%
7) JIM CORNETTE	2.6%
8) BRUNO SAMMARTINO	2.3%
9) TERRY FUNK	2.3%
10) HARLEY RACE	2.1%
OTHERS	32.5%



TOM PRESTON (Eagan, MN): 1) Hulk Hogan - I have always liked him. 2) Lex Luger - Either way I like him. 3) Kerry Von Erich - I always enjoy watching him wrestle. 4) Randy Savage - Very quick. I would like to see him wrestle Flair. 5) Austin Idol - I haven't seen him wrestle more than five times but like his style and would like to see him wrestle in the WWF or the NWA.

STEVE SIMS (Chicago, IL): Ric Flair was the best total package.

2) Steamboat was the best actual professional wrestling I saw during the decade.

3) Kerry Von Erich hit heights as a babyface that even Hogan never hit, though Hogan's run lasted ten times longer.

4) Curt Hennig has been the most under-utilized wrestler, or his talent, of this decade, to me.

5) Terry Gordy always made every match I saw him in interesting, even if it was to see when his knees would finally give out.

EVAN GINZBURG (Bayside, NY): 1) Ric Flair - so many great matches. 2) Roddy Piper - great brawls and heat, babyface turn a terrible mistake. 3) Midnight Express - best matches consistently of any US tag team. Off year in '89.

STEVE GENNARELLI: Bruno Sammartino - In a recent radio interview, Bruno stated that after his '76 neck injury he wasn't the same wrestler. He also said he should not have come back in the eighties. Yes, Bruno was no longer the strongman of the 60's and early 70's. He couldn't take the hard bumps like he used to. But he was still Bruno, and just seeing him there, in super condition - no gimmicks, no frills, just the tights and boots. That's all that many of us wanted, and he delivered.

KLON (Melbourne, FL): Do you really have to ask? Who called himself Klon Brody? Who will never forgive Verne Gagne for his public ignorance. To answer my personal favorite (may he find eternal peace). Frank "The Hammer" Goodish, "King Kong" Bruiser Brody.

ELYSE ZOIS (Union, NJ): Hulk Hogan - He's the one who got me hooked on pro wrestling. I don't care how many people criticize his style, his workrate, even his hairline. He remains my personal favorite.

(DECAWARDS continued on page 30)

THE RANDOM MARC PRESENTS

SPECIAL

EXCLUSIVE FICTIONAL EXCERPTS OF TV SHOWS NEVER TO AIR
By The Random Marc

CURT HENNIG'S FIRST NWA TV INTERVIEW

"I am MAN and I will be the man in the NWA. You humanoid nine-to-five lifers (copyright Nick Bockwinkel) feeding your fat faces and fat families aren't men. You go to your crummy jobs and complain that you're underpaid when you're lucky to be employed at all. You'd all like to be me and all your wives wish you were. I've got an unlisted phone number so your fat ugly wives can't call me. When I walk down the street people say "Who is that man?" When you walk down the street, nobody even notices. When I walk into a restaurant, the mître de snaps to attention and says, "Right this way, Mr. Hennig," and everyone stops eating to gaze upon he with awe and admiration. What happens when you walk into a restaurant? Everyone ignores you and acts like your not there. Then they slop your bowl in front of you and you slap it up like a dog. Then when it's time to pay, you're short. You get flustered. You're always flustered. Because you're losers. LOSERS! You make me sick."

"Edge city, Jim."

"I think you're exactly right, Bob."

"And why do you make me sick? Because I'm a man. I am MAN and you are nothing. NOTHING!"

"Let's go to Joe's nose (copyright Paul Heyman)"

"Hello, wrestling fans. I'm going to be the first to throw my hat in the ring and make a bid to become MAN's manager."

"Doesn't he mean his nose, Jim?"

"Wait a minute, Jim Ross, Bob Caudle, Joe Pedicino, and all you clowns glued to your boob tubes. I'm the only man to manage MAN."

"I thought you were fired, Paul."

"Listen, Jim Ross, my level of talent transcends executive decisions. You can't keep a good mouth shut."

"Let's go now, fans, to..."

"ME. Let's go to ME, Jim Ross."

"I'm sorry, Michael, but we have another interview scheduled now."

"Oh yeah? Well, who is more important than ME, Ross?"

"The Road Warriors."

"Oh... uh... I'll be back later."

"We snack on Elvis and dine on..."

"Oh, shut up, Hawk. I'm sick of you. Dine on this."

"It's breaking down, fans. Animal is attacking Hawk."

"Look, Jim, something has fallen from Animal's trunks. I think it's a piece of paper."

"It looks like a check, Bob. Let's see. Yes, it's a check made out to Road Warrior Animal for... gee... there's a lot of zeros here and it's signed by... omigod... it's signed by Jim Cornette, my own colleague."

"That's right, America, your prayers have been answered."

"But Corny, you and I have worked so well together. You can't turn on me."

"I'm turning on everybody, Jim Ross. Don't take it so personally like the Dudes did."

"But nobody liked the Dudes, so it was okay. But, now this. Why?"

"Pressure from the sheets, Ross. Attacking the Dudes just wasn't enough. Hit him again, Animal! I love this guy. You know, Jim Ross, that when Michael Hayes gave his concert, every stray cat from Jonesboro to Marietta committed suicide?"

"What does that have to do with anything?"

"Nothing. I'm just warming up, getting loose, going for that old magic. And I've got a surprise for Paul Ellering, too. My Mama's money has insured that I can hire someone to take care of him while Animal is destroying Hawk at arenas all around this great land of ours."

"Who'd you get, James?"

"The man who drove Paul Ellering out of wrestling and into managership. The man who defeated him in pose down after pose down all around the AWA back when they were a real promotion. The mayor of Brooklyn Park, himself..."

"All right, McMahon. I mean, Jim Ross. WHERE'S ELLERAT?" ***

(DECAWARDS continued from page 29)

GARY COLLINS (St. Paul, MN): Harley Race is my all-time favorite, though the 1980's weren't his peak years. I love Brody, but I didn't get to see any of his Japan stuff and I thought his stint in World Class was uneventful. The only wrestlers I went to live cards in the Twin Cities to see were Race, Piper, and Flair. Sentimentality causes me to say Race.

TIM D'ALLAIRD (Bayside, NY): 1) The Road Warriors - I would travel into the eye of Hurricane Hugo just to watch a Warriors squash match. They have been my all time favorite wrestlers since the first time I ever saw them.

2) Ric Flair - The ultimate professional in a sport filled with unprofessional people.

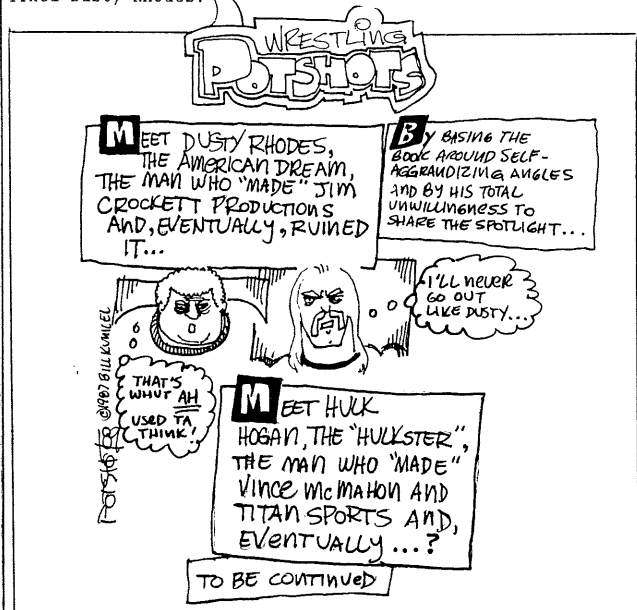
3) Randy Savage - The only person who can make me watch WWF wrestling and enjoy it.

MIKE GUNTER (Raleigh, NC): 1) Ric Flair - His matches have given me more excitement than anyone and his persona puts him a notch above.

2) Jim Cornette - I set up and pay more attention when he's own TV because he makes me laugh.

3) Owen Hart (not Blue Blazer) - Maybe he will become the wrestler of the nineties.

JAMIE WARD (Secane, PA): 1) Roddy Piper - I've loved him since his Georgia days. 2) Michael Hayes. 3) Hulk Hogan - I'm never disappointed with Hogan. 4) Ric Flair. 5) Dusty Rhodes - I may not like Virgil Runnels, but I've always liked Dusty Rhodes.



JEFF COHEN (Great Neck, NY): 1) Roddy Piper. A fascinated guy, in and out of the ring. Hogan may have had a ready made star vehicle with "No Holds Barred," but "They Live" was light years ahead in every way. Has said the most colorful things with "When they have the answers, I change the questions." "Don't you wish you were us?" and his eye pokes.

2) Don Muraco.

3) Fred Blassie - The sorriest sight I witnessed was at the Nausea Coliseum in 1985, when Blassie fought Albano. It went forty seconds, then Blassie took the cane and blasted Albano. A steel cage rematch was announced to groans. But Blassie came back and took the mike to lambast the crowd, perhaps stirring some to buy tickets despite the promised pathetic bout. On "Lifestyles with Regis Philbin," he went out of character to discuss his knee surgery. An original whose limited appearances still mean a lot.

4) Rick Steiner - He has come on like a steam engine with bizarre interviews and phenomenal ability. How many remember that he was TV champion for thirty-plus days? He will get more opportunities.

5) Randy Savage - From the old World Class days, to his introduction and naming of Elizabeth as "manager," through his thrashing of Steamboat to become the I-C Champ, then WWF Champ, and finally to "Kingship," Savage is a capable, dominant wrestler at the top of his game. By 1999, he will be a happy memory and will not rank highly at all, but one of the best workers of the decade and a true presence.

ALEX MARVEZ (Miami, FL): 1) Roddy Piper - Hot Rod captured my interest like never before when I was thirteen years old and glued to my television set to watch Piper's Pit. Beating up Frankie Williams, attacking Jimmy Snuka with a coconut, cracking a gold record over Lou Albano's head -- he was bad. And I loved it. If it were not for him, I wouldn't have nearly half the interest I now have.***

ARS: DECADE'S TOP TEN

BY BILL KUNKEL

The following "Angle Rating System" feature will examine the the top ten vote getters in the TORCH DECAWARD balloting. It is based on the athletes' performances over the course of the entire decade and may differ from the actual rating they would receive for 1989.

1) RIC FLAIR

CHARISMA (9): He ain't Hulk Hogan, but he has the kind of charisma Hogan would have if he were a human being. Even as a heel, he's maintained his magnetic appeal throughout the eighties.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (9): Always finds a way to make his matches interesting and has been consistent through the decade.

WRESTLING SKILL (10): Nuff said.

CONDITION (9): Has actually gotten stronger through the eighties in this area.

INTERVIEW SKILL (8): Did too many interviews to kill time for the Crocketts, which hurts his otherwise excellent rating here.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (7): Prototype seventies wrestler, his "never hits the gym" appearance hurts him in today's environment.

WRESTLING POWER (6.5): Never a power wrestler, but doesn't look weak.

TOTAL: 58.5.

2) HULK HOGAN

CHARISMA (10): Only full-fledged ten I have ever seen.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (8): Not physically gifted, but has an intuitive sense of drama that is uncanny.

WRESTLING SKILL (6): He ain't no Gotch, but he isn't the bum wags have pictured him as. Got hotter through the late eighties and has now taken several steps backward.

CONDITION (5): King of the modern ten minute match.

INTERVIEW SKILL (8): Did a lot of interviews and always kept the fans' interest.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (9): Look all the Hulk duplicates with blond hair, height, muscles, and deep tans that have come and gone. Imitation is the sincerest form of flattery.

WRESTLING POWER (8): However strong this guy really may be, he's convinced the audience he's Hercules, so what the hey.

TOTAL: 54.

3) RICKY STEAMBOAT

CHARISMA (9): When he steps in the ring, he appears confident and fans react to and respect that.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (10): The greatest to ever step inside a ring in terms of his ability to create drama. In the teeth of fan hatred, he turned many an NWA house crowd in his favor in the late-eighties.

WRESTLING SKILL (10): When you look back on the great matches of the decade, Steamer was in more of them than even Flair. A great NWA Champion.

INTERVIEW SKILL (7): Could be very witty and does killer impressions, but has never been a top notch interview for some reason.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (8): Good, but not awe inspiring.

WRESTLING POWER (7): Not weak by any means, but too small, so thought of as a speed and flying wrestler.

TOTAL: 51.

4) BRUISER BRODY

CHARISMA (9): Animal magnetism at its human apotheosis.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (8.5): Superb at working a match, especially for such a big man.

WRESTLING SKILL (7): Not the greatest technician, but superb for someone his size.

CONDITION (7.5)

INTERVIEW SKILL (7): Never worked well as a face and many face interviews with World Class and Texas All-Star were very poor, hurting his overall rating. His interviews in the AWA as a heel were fantastic.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (9): Again, animalistic and off-the-wall. He looked like he was real, not a fictional character who was "normal" when he left for home.

WRESTLING POWER (8): Certainly not a chiseled Muscle Magazine cover candidate, but naturally powerful and big enough to be believable.

TOTAL: 56

5) RODDY PIPER:

CHARISMA (8.5): Upper limits of charismatic appeal.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (8): Occasionally hams out, but mostly excellent.

WRESTLING SKILL (5.5): Talks a great fight; fights a very mediocre one.

CONDITION (7): Average. Sometimes better, sometimes worse than normal.

INTERVIEW SKILL (10): Only pure ten I've ever heard.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (6): How he got as far as he did with that face and body is a tribute to his microphone and dramatic skills.

WRESTLING POWER (4.5): A big power move for him is a Moe Howard fingers-to-the-eyes blow.

TOTAL: 49.5

6) TED DIBIASE

CHARISMA (7): Big improvement since move to Titan.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (7): Slightly above average over the whole decade.

WRESTLING SKILL (8.5): Superb technician who was vased in too many UWF brawls.

CONDITION (8): Was overweight through much of his UWF sojourn, but still one of the better conditioned wrestlers.

INTERVIEW SKILL (7.5): Has steadily improved over the decade.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (6.5): Although big, never looked like it around others wrestlers.

WRESTLING POWER (7): Executes superbly what power moves he does using leverage more than brute strength. Not a big power grappler, however.

TOTAL: 51.5

7) RANDY SAVAGE

CHARISMA (8.5): Always magnetic, made more so by Liz's presence in Whiff.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (7.5)

WRESTLING SKILL (8): Great aggressive wrestling, with a wide range of moves, he has nonetheless turned in many indifferent performances in recent years. Always great on the big shows, however.

CONDITION (8.5): Great shape.

INTERVIEW SKILL (7.5): Has improved fantastically in the past two years. Still sounds like he needs a good dose of Kaopectate, however.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (7): Very small. His ascent in Titan has been a personal triumph.

WRESTLING POWER (7.5): Very impressive for a man his size.

8) HARLEY RACE

CHARISMA (7): A great wrestler, but the Racer has never been a personality guy. His act is simple: he's the toughest sailor on shore-leave. He does that very well, however.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (7): As in many areas, his greatest works was in the seventies.

WRESTLING SKILL (9): A joy to watch. The original Excellence of Execution. His slow, deliberate, methodical destruction act was chilling in his prime. He can still brawl.

CONDITION (8): Many a one hour match.

INTERVIEW SKILL (6)

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (6): What a body! He looks "raw boned" as they used to say.

WRESTLING POWER (7.5).

TOTAL: 50.5

9) NICK BOCKWINKEL

CHARISMA (7): His "thinking man's heel" act got him great heat, but he was even better in the seventies.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (7)

WRESTLING SKILL (8): Superb technician.

CONDITION (7)

INTERVIEW SKILL (6.5): His literate interviews were a delightful rarity. Sometimes he stretches for the ten dollar word, but he is still fun to listen to.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (7): More a sixties-type appearance.

WRESTLING POWER (7).

TOTAL: 49.5.

10) KERRY VON ERICH

CHARISMA (7.5): Had a fantastic appeal earlier in the decade, but he's blown much of it off since then.

DRAMATIC ABILITY (7): Handicapped by a lack of physical grace and body control and a shortage in brain power.

WRESTLING SKILL (6): Nothing special, before or since his accident, but could have great matches with the right opponent (The ability to have a great match with Ric Flair does not mean you are a great wrestler, however).

CONDITION (7)

INTERVIEW SKILL (4): Frequently comical, rarely better

(ARS continued on page 33)

Everybody knows "they." "They" tell say whether you can or cannot do something... "They" say this or that... Well, "They" are at it again, 'cause here's another look at the top ten wrestlers of the 1980's that "they" voted on. Bear in mind that "we" are not necessarily "they," since while we find the eleven individuals making

an interesting collection, it's not necessarily the eleven we would have in "our" Mondo ten.

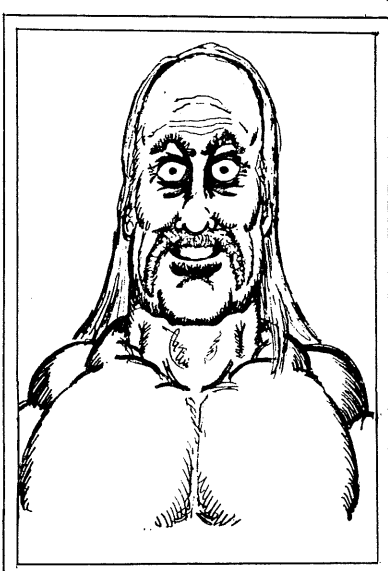
Nonetheless, with an eclectic criteria these eleven represent an important group, albeit this xenophobic constraint, we will now take a quickie Mondo Yearbook sneer-look.

1) **RIC FLAIR:** There is almost no need for comment. In fact, to belabor the obvious, Ric Flair is number one on a list that does not even have a two through ten. Such is the preeminence of his excellence, using virtually any accepted criteria and picking any particular year of the 1980's, Ric Flair was the stand-out standard. The enormity of this truth is second only to the more amazing fact that it applies to every particular year of the 1980's.

It was obvious to us in 1983 that Ric Flair was the wrestler of the eighties, and with the eighties now ended, our judgement is now confirmed.

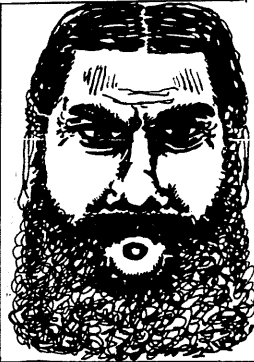


2) **HULK HOGAN:** Obviously wrestling ability is neither the chief nor the sole standard by which the eleven top ten were determined. This understood, it would be hard to argue that Hogan is not the preeminent wrestling personality of the eighties. Certainly, this buffoon was most influential, recognized, successful, and heralded Hoaxter since Barnum. Lest we sound priggishly piquant, it is not his overbearing manner that bugs us, or his hypocritical posturing about prayers and vitamins while



swilling steroids and bowing to the money god mammon the irks us still, or even the public's acceptance of his "24 inch pythons" or "incredible physique" which we credit to a faulty tape measure and a cancer causing tanning bed that raises our ire - not when the most galling of all is the absurd and ridiculous notion that this ridiculous garbonzo is perceived as not only a wrestler, but this country's best wrestler, a more absurd notice we can't imagine!

Any failure by either to be the premiere figure has as much to do with the changing business and their own foibles. We only hope both will find their ways back to an NWA-type atmosphere where some value is placed on ability to wrestle while their most productive years are still upon us.



5) **RODDY PIPER:** Second best for use in the Whiff was Roddy Piper - who seemed the antitheses of the visual Vince-created villain. With nary a steroid muscle to offer, nor unusual size or strength, Roddy Piper got the highest EPA MPG rating imaginable on only his quick wit and quicker tongue. Goes to show you the old relationship between bark and bite, Piper is one of the eighties' Chief culprits in blurring to the point of nonexistence that line between heel and babyface.



3) **RICKY STEAMBOAT**
& 6) **TED DIBIASE:** It is hard to razz either of these choices. Two of the top technicians to emerge and occasionally dominate the eighties, both with as much ability at decade's end as it's beginning.

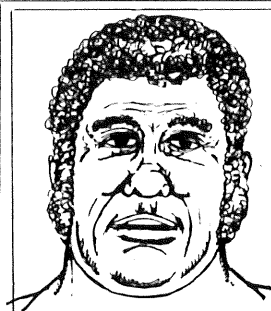
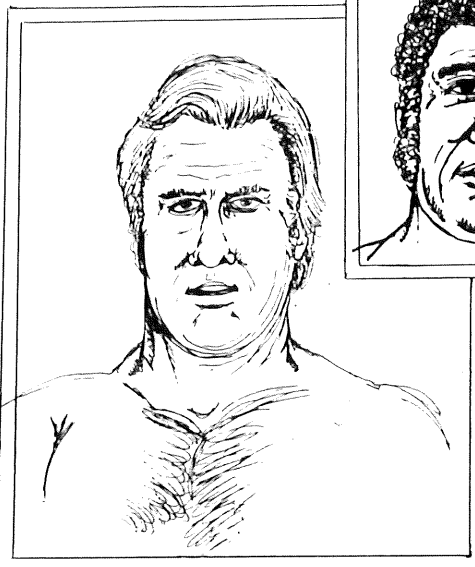


4) **BRUISER BRODY:** We were almost too irrational to yet discuss this most incredible of eighties individuals, but Bruiser Brody, by setting always his own standards of method and madness will now forever stand watch as the inaugural member of the eighties hall of fame deciding who, if any other, is as worthy. His bark was worse than his bite, lucky for us.



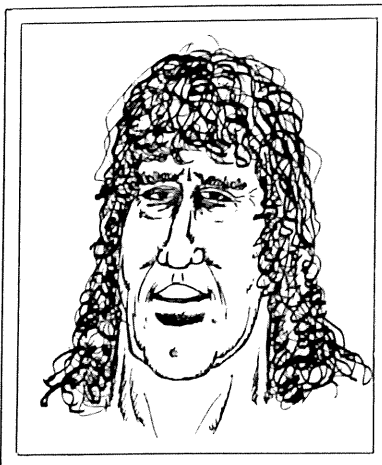
7) **RANDY SAVAGE:** This guy is the chief beneficiary of the Whiff era in-so-far as being worthy and being pushed goes. Seeing how this blacklisted psycho was relegated to entertaining all the Jed Clampetts of the world before Vince threw the dice in 1985, it is like the one satisfying word amidst the lexicon of shame that much of the Vinnie circus has become.

8) **HARLEY RACE:** Another questionable choice - very much so as his real influence remained in the 1970's. In fact, for like half the eighties, Race was inactive - or worse, stumbling around totally lost and out of place as some relic from a bygone era going through the motions for an uncomprehending and inappreciative WWF audience.



9) **NICK BOCKWINKEL:** One of the questionable choices as his stature receded with inevitable retirement. Still, he acquitted himself with dignity and style and appeared on the top of his game to the end. His productive years were behind him after 1983, but the AWA's were also, so who noticed.

10) **KERRY VON ERICH:** Wait a minute - what is he doing here? I don't care-y Von Erich has about two decent years of acceptance and about eight indecent years of being pushed. Either it is "be kind to animals" week, or "hire the disabled month," but this permanent mentally-handicapped sticker isn't even useful to keep around for laughs - he is too pathetic to ever get the joke.



10) **TERRY FUNK:** Another whose best stuff was in the 1970's, who spent part of the decade inactive nursing those aggravated and aggravating injuries and also parading his sideshow to the Whiff zombies to surprisingly decent impact. But Terry Funk is a master of any era in which he is involved and with his excellent stint for the NWA in 89, proved this to all our Mondo standards. ***



UNEXCLUSIVE REAL EXCERPTS OF TV SHOWS THAT DID AIR WRESTLER OF THE DECADE SPEAKS

In 1982 when Otto Wanz was the AWA World Heavyweight Champion, for some reason Ric Flair was in his hometown of the Twin Cities. In an age where there were territories, Ric Flair appeared on the AWA All-Star Wrestling program in Minneapolis as a special guest of Gene Okerlund. The following is a transcript of this very unique and classic interview:

Gene Okerlund: "I'm sure this man will concur with me. He is the current NWA Champion. He is a native of the Twin Cities area. He's from Edina. Ladies and gentlemen, he is the "Nature Boy" Ric Flair. And Ric obviously you're in town for the big one here tonight. You're going to be watching it very, very closely. New World Champion Otto Wanz being challenged by the former Champ, Nick Bockwinkel?"

Ric Flair: "One of the reasons I'm the best, and one of the reasons that Ric Flair is NWA Champion is because he watches what's going on in the wrestling world. And I'm in town tonight. I'll be in the Civic Center somewhere watching the match between Bockwinkel and Wanz, and if you want my honest opinion, Nick Bockwinkel will send Wanz back to Germany as fast as he came here.

"And I want to say one thing about Ric Flair, and about professional wrestling. I need no introduction. I'm custom made from head to toe. There isn't a man, woman, or child that knows professional wrestling that doesn't know Ric Flair to be the premiere man. And when I've got to stand out here knowin' that Greg Gagne and Jim Brunzell are standing back there, a couple of guys I started with, and there is no love lost between us or Verne Gagne, it makes me feel real good to know that I'm right here in my home town, the NWA Heavyweight Champion, and there ain't a man alive, whether you like it or not, there ain't a man alive that can beat Ric Flair. And I see this clown Hulk Hogan standing out here in his t-shirt trying to tell everybody that he's a real dude. Well, Hogan, when you get in the ring with me brother, it won't be Sylvester Stalone you're grabbing on to, and you're going to bleed and you're going to sweat and you'll pay the price of a lifetime like I did. And Greg Gagne, sooner or later, you and I will have our day, too."

Gene Okerlund: "Hey, just a second gentleman!"

Greg Gagne walks onto the set: "There ain't a man here you could beat, Flair." ***

(TORCH YEAR-END AWARDS continued from page 11)

REGIONAL/INDEPENDENT WRESTLER OF THE YEAR

NEW CATEGORY

1989 YEAR-END:	POINTS
1) RICKY RICE	86
2) JERRY LAWLER	78
3) SCOTTY THE BODY	65
4) CACTUS JACK MANSON	58
5-10) Derrick Dukes; Chris Benoit; Larry Cameron; Tony Atlas; Beef Burton; Chris Champion.	

READER COMMENTS:

RHONDA CLARK: Wildside, Chris Champion and Mark Starr. They have really shown people of the South in the CWA what rough and tough is we had not seen since The Fantastics and Badd Company. We definitely enjoyed out walk on the "Wild Side." ***

(ARS continued from page 31)

than ridiculous. There's only one Tower of Pizza.. Sounds like your typical brain-damaged jocko/golden boy type.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (10): Face it, the guy looks like a flipping god!

WRESTLING POWER (8)
TOTAL: 41.5

10) TERRY FUNK

CHARISMA (8): Always more charismatic than he seemed (whatever that means).

DRAMATIC ABILITY (8.5): Knows more ways to heat up a match than Flair, but isn't as consistently successful at the execution.

WRESTLING SKILL (8): Great brawler-type wrestler.

CONDITION (9): That battered old body is STILL in phenomenal shape!

INTERVIEW SKILL (8.5): Keeps getting better and better, but still hits an occasional clinker.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE (7): His appearance is against him.

WRESTLING POWER (7): Not a power wrestler, but possessed with impressive tendon strength.

TOTAL: 56. ***

MEMORIES ARE MADE OF THIS

By Mick Karch

My good friend wrestling promoter, Wally Karbo, had often said that promoting is not a bed of roses. I'm here to tell you that being a wrestling fan in the 1970's was also not a bed of roses. I am here to share with you some of the confrontations I and some of my wrestling fan cohorts had with various and sundry members of the wrestling profession during the afore mentioned 1970's. And yes Mr Mike, I realize that much of this is rehash material from the Bockwinkel Brigade "Lean Mean Machines" newsletters. Be that as it may, let's forge ahead.

One particular confrontation was with Percival Pringle. That's right, Percy Pringle. He of the platinum blond hair, the Ethyl Murmom like screaming voice, and eyeballs that looked like he was in the film "Faces of Death" as a victim of an electrocution. He wrestled in the AWA area in the 1970's and as was our custom we were sitting ringside at the television tapings at the Calhoun Beach Hotel. Everytime Percy got into the ring we gave him a rather difficult time. One day old Percy decided it was all he could stand and he can't stand no more. He got into the ring and screamed, and I mean screamed, in our direction "Shut up you bunch of delinquents." Wrong thing to say, fatty. The gentleman sitting next to me said, "Hey, chubby, I met your parents; they're a couple of nice guys." Case closed on Percy Pringle.

Another confrontation was with a man by the name of Frankie Diamond. No relation to Paul Diamond, I'm sure. Certainly not to Diamond Dallas Page or to Niel Diamond. What Frankie Diamond is doing these days, I don't know. Probably fifteen to twenty. At any rate, anytime this loser came into the ring he would look over at our contingent of ringsiders and say, "Why don't you punks go home and take a bath." This particular confrontation ended one evening when one gentleman behind us said, "We did take a bath... with your wife." Case closed on Frankie Diamond.

Chief Wahoo McDaniell, I must admit, was one who got the better of us. One afternoon at the Calhoun Beach Hotel Wahoo was getting on an elevator heading downstairs to grab a beach burger before the television tapings when one in our group said, "Hey, there was the guy who didn't make it in the NFL." Wrong thing to say. Wahoo, not known for being mild mannered over the years, went into a five minute diatribe of verbal abuse on my cohorts, myself, the elevator operator, and just about everyone else who walked into the building. He claimed that if we wanted to put on the helmet and shoulder pads he would go one-on-one with us anytime, on any field, anyplace. The truth of the matter is Wahoo probably did know every field, every place because I've never seen a man traded so many times in an NFL career.

Of course one of our group was not to be intimidated and told Wahoo he looked like Buddy Hackett. Wahoo's response? Well, to put it mildly, he suggested that person perform a rather bizarre sexual act upon his own person. Whether he went home and did that or not, I do not know, but it was a scary confrontation with Wahoo McDaniell.

Lucious Lars Anderson, a.k.a. Larry Hieniem, was probably one of the biggest jerks that we ever dealt with. One evening at the Minneapolis Auditorium on a hot summer night when it was about 95 degrees I showed up at the building in shorts with an ace bandage around my knee - the result of injury I had sustained in a softball game. Hieniem stuck his head out of the locker room; he looked at me; he looked at the knee, and said, "Get a load of this guy, trying to pretend he's an athlete." Did I shut my mouth and take it sitting down? Of course not. As Hieniem was walking down the hall to get a hot dog (amazing how these wrestlers eat before matches) I said, "Me pretend to be an athlete? You do that every week." Wrong thing to say. The Lucious One stopped dead in his tracks, returned to my station, and said, "You know something, you're a smart ass, and you're a hang-around; you're a smart-ass and you're a hang-around." Trust me ladies and gentleman, that was an exact quote. Yes I was and he was right, yes I was and he was right.

But that was not to be the only confrontation with Mr. Hieniem. At the WTCN studios one evening when the man was pulling out of a parking lot with tag team partner Buddy Wolfe he spotted me in his rear view mirror about fifty yards behind. He put his expensive sports car in reverse, burned rubber the length of the parking lot, pulled up even with me, rolled down his window, and said, "I just thought I'd see how the peon was doing." Well, Mr Hieniem I'm doing fine these days, and what are you doing? Time? Ha, ha, ha!

I was at the WTCN studios when Greg Gagne got into the ring and the guy sitting next to me said, "Getta load of this bag of bones." Greg thought that it was me! I swear to God it wasn't, but he looked at me and said, "Why don't

you get in here?" And despite my heated denials that I had said anything, Greg Gagne pretty much hated my guts for the next twelve years.

Other notable confrontations have found Bobby "The Brain" Heenan calling me a part of the anatomy generally covered by the seat of the pants, and referring to me as Wally Karbo's illegitimate son; Rene Goulet called one of my good friends a venereal disease; Jimmy Valiant called that same individual a piece of human waste; one evening after he sent me to get a cup of coffee and I didn't return, as quickly as he would have liked, Larry Hennig questioned my masculinity; what that has to do with a cup of coffee, I don't know; in a locker room in Winnipeg, Canada, Diamond, Timothy Flowers basically said all wrestling announcers are "Unathletic Glory Seeking Do Nothings"; (I don't know about "glory seeking," but I'll go along with the others) Veteran, albeit ancient, ring announcer Roger Kent threatened to break both of my arms and legs when he got wind of the fact that I was trying to break into the wrestling broadcast profession; Even the great Verne Gagne, while I was doing Las Vegas ring announcing for him, insisted that it's guys like me, unprofessional so-and-sos, that have cost him not hundreds, not thousands, but millions of dollars over the years."

Hmmmm... Hmmmm... Maybe I an unathletic, glory seeking, and a do nothing, but the singular cuase of the AWA? Now wait a minute. ***

(PREDICTIONS continued from page 16)

Vince will lose interest in wrestling around 1991 and move to Hollywood and the movies. He will lose most of his money around 1996, only to regain it around 2000 producing TV. He will serve as head of CBS for a short time around 2005 after being defeated for a seat on Congress.

Terry Funk becomes the best color man on TV replacing Jesse Ventura.

Japan will promote successful spot shows in the US using big cities and ESPN. Akira Maeda will become the big Japanese star of the nineties.

Randy Savage will marry Sensational Sherri in January of 1991.

The team of Doug Furnas and Dan Kroffat will win the WWF tag championship in 1991.

Bob Backlund will be the first wrestler to win both the WWF and NWA Title. True.

The LA Lakers are going to win the NBA Championship (again).

WALT MARSHALL: Hogan loses his strap to either Mr. Perfect or The Widow Maker.

Bob Backlund returns to a major promotion.

Flair will be fired as booker of the NWA. He will go to the WWF and win the title there.

Randy Savage will win the Intercontinental Title again.

Lex Luger will either become the next NWA Champion or he will pack his bags and go to the WWF.

Vince McMahon will be involved in an angle and tell everybody he is the boss.

Ricky Steamboat will be back with Vince and Co.

STEVE GENNARELLI: The NWA will continue its slow, but steady, rate of progress in 1990. At February's PPV, Luger will pin Flair for the Title. Luger versus Sting will headline the springtime period through May's PPV event. At the summer Bash PPV, Flair finally gets his rematch versus Luger. In the year's hottest angle, Flair's "advisor" Rick Steamboat, turns on "The Nature Boy" just as he has Luger beat. Steamboat will make a surprisingly effective heel and the Flair-Steamboat feud will again be "Feud of the Year" material. PPV buy-rates will level-off in the 2-2.5% range. Attendance at arenas will be up and Flair will remain in charge for most, if not all, of 1990.

1990 will be a mixed bag for Titan Sports. As rumored, Paul E. Dangerously will arrive in February. Paul will replace Brother Love, who will be phased out. Wrestlemania VI will bring 75,000 to Toronto for Hogan versus Warrior, Zeus versus Andre, and Piper versus Perfect, among others. Piper will take off after Wrestlemania, returning in July as a heel. Roddy will form an alliance with Dangerously. Rude and Heenan will both turn sometime in 1990. Hogan will remain champ, but he will cut back his appearances since "Even More Holds Barred" goes into production in October. Houses will be down in 1990 as even Hogan's name on the marquee no longer guarantees good crowds. Sting will jump to the WWF and be groomed by Vince as Hogan's eventual successor. ***

THE STEELE RINGPOST WITH JEFF STEELE

As I began to write this article I had planned to write on wrestling in the eighties compared to wrestling in the sixties and seventies. I researched the article by going to the library and going through microfilm newspaper advertisements for wrestling events in December of 1969 and December of 1979.

I have come to the conclusion that the eighties brought an end to professional wrestling as we knew it. Putting aside for a moment the moral aspects of how wrestlers were treated in the sixties and seventies compared to the supposed "lavish" treatment of top stars today, anyone who cannot see the benefit of territory wrestling is not being honest.

One of the greatest things about the territory years was that a promoter could control what people believed about his wrestlers. If the promoters of the Oklahoma-Texas-Louisiana-Mississippi Territory (later to become Mid-South/UWF) wanted Spoiler #1 and Spoiler #2 to be the US Tag Champions then that is what they were. I grew up believing Bill Watts was something great because he was the North American Heavyweight Champion. How the hell was I supposed to know he only worked in four or five states?

On occasion special quest wrestlers would be brought in from "around the world" and fans were told stories about them. When Cyclone Negro entered the territory they told us he was the "International Champion" and that he once bit off a man's ear. We believed them.

Communism, in order to survive, must maintain a monopoly on information. That, as it pertains to communism, is dangerous. I feel the information monopoly, however, is vital to professional wrestling. Do you realize that two-hundred miles north of me, a scant three-and-half-hour drive, was Memphis wrestling which had a whole different roster of talent, different angles, and different feuds. I knew nothing about it. It was an incredible treat to visit my grandparents and get to see it. One-hundred miles south was Gulf Coast Wrestling. Eighty miles east was Alabama Wrestling. We knew nothing about them because we knew only what we were told.

The Hollywood Blonds were the US Tag Champs. Dennis Stamp was the rookie of the year. Jack Curtis Jr., a man who lived two streets over from me and worked at Grant's Department Store and wrestled in Jackson, MI on Wednesday nights, was the giant killer in Jackson. Here he could beat anybody. We were neither stupid nor unsophisticated; we were simply a group of people who allowed ourselves to be fed controlled information for the purpose of enjoying the outlet of professional wrestling.

It was not difficult for the promotion. For six years they controlled the Mid-South area fans with the inept announcing of "Ed Whalen act-alike" Boyd Peirce on play-by-play. And (I'm not making this up) a totally blind man, Leroy McGurk, did color. Leroy, God rest his soul, was able to keep up with the match much better than Peirce and he could not even see!

With the eighties came the explosion of Cable TV and the death of the sport. The problems with cable TV are two-fold. First off, at least in the south, cable was big, big news. Anything that was on cable just by its nature was inherently "better" than anything that was on locally. All of a sudden Boyd, LeRoy, and all the others like them had competition.

The competition was not for the product. That aspect would have been fine because promotional wars benefit the fans. Instead it was the competition for controlled information that threatened them the most. Suddenly if people turned to the right channel they could see another set of US Tag Champs, another World Champ, another Doctor X, and on and on.

When the promotions lost "information control" to cable TV, in kicked problem number two. The "little guys," circuit and territory promoters, freaked out! They, on the one hand, were critical of the big shot cable guys, namely Jim Crockett and Company. On the other hand, they were trying to use some of the cable talent to line their own pockets. All the while they were trying to keep the public from believing cable was better and somehow keep their own stable of wrestlers from leaving the fold in search of national exposure and bigger money. Now that sounds impossible, and it was. The territories were doomed. It was only a matter of time.

Part B of problem #2 was that the people with the cable outlets decided to become a monopoly. Georgia Championship Wrestling was great when it first broadcast nationally. Why? Because it was a territory promotion - a good one -

that was now on national TV.

I very much wanted to go to the advertised Omni cards. I couldn't stand it. They couldn't stand it either and decided it would be great to be the only show in town. So the NWA, the mother of the greatest territories, in effect, became the undertaker for the very territories that had been its life-blood for decades.

Instead of the NWA, we had Jim Crockett Promotions; instead of a World Champion that had real credibility from defending against and defeating top territory stars, we had a guy who defended the "Cable TV Title" belt against the same two or three guys with the same predictable endings over and over.

The McMahon factor closed the coffin, filled the grave, and burned down the cemetery. Anyone who calls the WWF "professional wrestling" knows little about the topic. Hulk Hogan doesn't defend the title; he simply makes appearances. Vince doesn't even call it "wrestling." He calls it "Sports Entertainment." What the heck is that?

Does anybody really care about the WWF tag belts, the Intercontinental Title, or even Hogan's belt? No! They want to see the "TV stars" and that ain't rasslin'. I don't blame McMahon for what he's doing anymore than I blame Disney or Hasbro for what they're doing. I just think anyone who judges pro wrestling in America to be in a healthy state because the WWF makes big money is deluding and not facing the fact that it is NOT EVEN WRESTLING!

Answer this question: If the WWF were the only promotion, would you pay five dollars for four issues of the Wrestling Observer? Would Dave Meltzer even print the Wrestling Observer? No, because the WWF is not "pro wrestling." It is "sports entertainment."

If the NWA and all the other WWF clones would have awakened at some point in the eighties to realize that wrestling fans had supported many different promotions nationwide for fifty years and if they would have stuck with regional promotions and used the TBS slot as a vehicle to promote them then we wouldn't be having this funeral.

As we enter the ninties think about what and who is not here anymore: World Class; Fritz Von Erich; the UWF; Championship Wrestling from Florida; Continental Wrestling Federation; Georgia Championship Wrestling; Mid-Atlantic Championship Wrestling; Genius Jim Crockett; Bill Watts; Verne Gagne (for all intents and purposes); all masked wrestlers; the sleeper hold as a finisher (after all, if you cannot control information, you can not have a hold like this); local interviews; and for many of the great wrestling cities in the US, live wrestling, period.

In the sixties and seventies wrestling employed approximately 1200-1500 wrestlers inside the ring. I did a term paper on it in college; I know. This means they were earning a livable wage, too. If you ignore the WWF, and if you don't you're making a huge mistake as far as pro wrestling goes, wrestling probably doesn't employ fifty wrestlers at livable wages. I don't mean guys who need a day job, too. I don't mean Memphis, USWA, Don Owens, Alabama, et al. Fifty and thirty-five dollar nights don't cut it today.

Fifty people. A large McDonalds may employ that many at one store. If wrestling is to ever be a force again, it will have to resurrect itself from the dead. It is over as we know it. What more evidence do you need? The owner of the only promotion left is Ted Turner and he hired Jim Herd to run the damn thing. The only thing left to report on in the sheets are independent cards in bars that few go to and the ridiculous fights between writers and publishers of newsletters. Oh yes, I forgot the five or six pay-per-views each year.

Wrestling in the mid-eighties had one foot in the grave. As the eighties come to a close, I really feel that real wrestling, the kind that got most of us interested in the first place, is dead. Cause of death? Suicide by stupidity.

By the way, December 11, 1969 saw the last card of the sixties in Jackson, MI with a main event listed as, "Negro Star Tom Jones versus Trech Phillips," plus Antonio Rocca & The Great Apollo versus Sputnik Monroe & Jerry Miller, and in a tournament bout for the Mississippi Title, Jack Curtis Jr. wrestled "newcomer" Mike York. Ringside seats were two dollars, general admission was a buck and a half, children under twelve, seventy five cents.

On December 12, 1979, on the last card of the seventies in Jacson, MI, the main event was a North American Title bout. Dick Murdoch, champion, defending against, Mike George. Mike Sharpe versus Ken Patera, Stan Hansen & Buck Robley versus Bruiser Bob Sweetan & Ernie Ladd, Terry Gordie (sic) and Lord Michael Hayes versus Charlie Cook & Dizzy Golden. Ringside seats were \$5, general admission \$3.50, under ten, \$2, and under four, free.

The last card of the eighties in Jacson, MI occurred in 1986. This is a city with a drive-in population of 400,000 that supported professional wrestling every week for thirty years - just ask Bill Watts. So with the tremendous "popularity of professional wrestling," nobody runs here anymore.

Send flowers to the family of professional wrestling. Sorry to report it like this, but it beez that ways. ***

WRESTLING WITH THE FUTURE

BY Ray Wiebbe

Looking over 1989, there were progressive moves by the NWA and Don Owens' Pacific Northwest promotion. The PWA in Minnesota and Larry Sharpe's East Coast group continued their uphill battle. The CWF in Tennessee made plans to fold and speculation says the CWA in Memphis may follow. Nearly every other federation stayed the same. Throughout the 1990 many panic buttons may be pushed. Promoter/Coach Ed Sharkey says 1990 will be the toughest year he's ever seen. Territories are down, TV wrestling stinks, and live cards are becoming a thing of the past.

Pay-per-view will dominate in 1990. Video sales will be solid as well. However, wrestling as we know and as many want it may drastically change. Women and minorities will have even less chances to work. Rookies may as well get outside jobs. Two to four year vets will be forced into mental pandemonium and a constant "should I quit" debate. Proven vets will accept torment and wonder what went wrong.

This spells out a fairly gloomy picture. Let's face it, only two North American wrestling federations offer grapplers a large enough salary to utilize a bank account. That's the WWF and NWA. The WWF isn't exactly hiring by the bunch and the NWA seems to have pulled the "help wanted" signs. In 1989 the WWF introduced no new women and even laid-off the women's champion. In 1989 the WWF introduced only one minority, Zeus. The NWA hired dozens of talented wrestlers but kept even less. They, too, seem to lack women and minorities.

Calgary-Stampede saw some movement; most of it was out of town. They had several wrestlers quit in less than a month (Roger Smith, Randy Culley, Ron Starr, State Troopers, Dave Heath, Johnny Love, Teijo Khan, Red Tyler) and had tag champions (Dave Heath & Tom Nash) walk out. Crowds in some towns sank to handfulls, checks bounced, nobody stuck around long enough to help feuds draw, and heel Larry Cameron was the lone stable force. Things got so bad that Stu Hart's phone was disconnected and Dynamite Kid beat Bruce Hart in the locker room.

The CWA in Memphis had an off-year as well. Maybe fans have seen Jerry Lawler's act one time too many. Had he retired after beating Curt Hennig for the AWA World Title, he'd be prime for an Inokiesque or Ray Leonard-like comeback. Instead he confused fans by being a heel in one town and a hero in the next. He also confused folks by losing too many matches. One Memphis gate sunk near \$1200. It doesn't take "The Genius" to figure out nobody's getting rich here.

Texas' World Class group changed their name to the USWA. Crowds were up some, but again, bad booking hurt the promotion possibly to a point beyond repair. Things got so bad that several wrestlers began wrestling on independent cards on the side. Kerry jobbed to a fat freak, Taras Bulba, and Toni Adams turned porn to help gates.

Although Don Owens nearly folded three years ago, the Northwest made a rebound. Solid booking by Len Denton, appearances by Roddy Piper and Nord the Barbarian, and youngsters like Scotty the Body, Jeff Warner, Rex King, Brian Adams, and The Southern Rockers gave fans hope. So did the rumor that Piper dumped several hundred thou to the promotion.

The PWF started with a bang. Dusty's homecoming was fun. In the end it didn't draw, though. Only 80-125 people attended many cards. It did, however, allow the NWA to see how much Terry Funk had left and opened the door for Dusty and Big Steele (Tugboat Thomas) to enter the WWF.

Larry Sharpe found ways to sell tickets and very few other independents hung tough.

Minnesota's PWA probably offered the best talent and most entertaining cards of all the independents. Ken Patera, Brad Rheingans, Tom Zenk, Kenny Jay, The Russian Brute, Soldat Ustinov, Teijo Khan, Nord the Barbarian, Derrick Dukes, Ricky Rice, Tommy Jammer, Savannah Jack, and Sheik Kaissy were among the name stars who excelled here. Newcomers Ravishing Ronnie, The Derringers, Denise Storm, Jerry Lynn, Beef Burton, and Maximum Overdrive (Jeff Warner & Tim Hunt) didn't disappoint a soul in their main events.

While the PWA drew big crowds at Wrestle For Shelter and Riverplace in Minneapolis, and sold George's out in Fridley, MN many times, they also could not give workers full-time employment. They did run several dozen cards last year and outdrew the AWA in many sites; there is room for optimism. For now they take pride in being the proving ground for future stars. This surely is a plus, but everyone from the fans to the promoters are left wishing for TV, bigger arena cards, and a full-time schedule. Overall their year showed a B+ on their report card.

In some ways, the AWA had a good year. Their TV product has improved. They also cut down on lying. In February they held a card at the St. Paul Civic Center which drew poorly. It marked the return of Tom Zenk and the crowning of Larry Zbyszko as World Champion in a battle royal.

By the year's end, the AWA was filming before literally no fans, had only one card booked in December, drew less than one-hundred paid several times over the summer, and basically were down to only family and tag champs as guaranteed "show-ups." There was even talk of them closing shop when ESPN threatened not to renew their contract. A last second six month extension on the contract assured the AWA at least a fair shot at surviving the ninties.

As for the CWF, at the end of the year David Woods revealed plans to shut-down after a late-December TV taping. There is hope the territory will be filled by Paul E. Dangerously and Eddie Gilbert's prospective independent alliance.

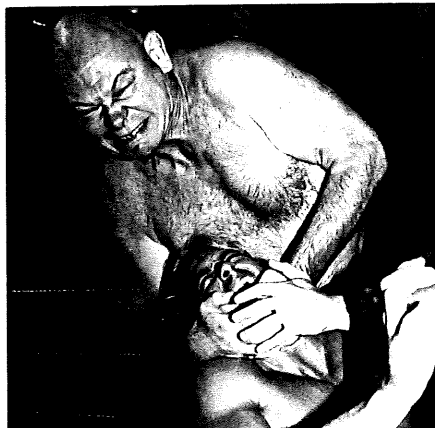
With the advent of PPV, the WWF and NWA can be lazy and make mistakes. Millions can be returns in just one day. They also have no competition.

Most other promotions and the business as a whole look rough. If newcomers can't stay busy, who will be ready to be tomorrow's stars?

One school of thought says neither the NWA nor the WWF care. Vince McMahon, it is believed, subscribes to the Ray Leonard "if I kill the sport, I got mines" theory. Ted Turner seems like he could fold the NWA any time. Then again, write-offs can be fun.

While many promoters are scratching their heads, Ed Sharkey nobly says, "This will be the most difficult year I've ever seen in my years of wrestling. It will separate the men from the boys, the thinkers from the doers, and the champs from the contenders... and pretenders. We, as promoters, will have to bear down."

Baron Von Raschke adds, "I loved the WWF. If everyone could be there, great. But only a few are so lucky."



But Baron also wisely adds, "Now, more than any time before, it's the time for the promoter to promote. Our job is to wrestle and some of us still care to. It's their job to get towns, sell tickets, and promote."

Unfortunately, the high costs of insurance, travel, building rental, and talent (who at least need to be guaranteed what they'd make bouncing or on their jobs) are forcing promoters to take less chances. And while hundreds of athletes become wrestlers each year, only a few handfulls are cocky enough to try promoting.

Don Owens recently told several wrestlers to get jobs. Teijo Khan did, Bret Derringer went back to school, and who knows how many others did the same.

Derrick Dukes often says, "I look at wrestling as an extracurricular activity. If I get into the WWF, NWA, or Japan, I wouldn't blow it, but I can't bank on going there."

As wrestlers become laid-off by the NWA and WWF, some territories may re-open. Maybe a Steve Williams could re-ignite Oklahoma or a Rick Rude or Warrior fire-up Minnesota, but they could fail too.

Only the independents and local promotions offer hope. The hope is in the future. Yet if this sport is to survive, the independent promotions must forge ahead.

Old-timers say the business is in shambles as many are forced to battle in far away lands - some not safe - to pay bills while others live in utter torment.

Yet in all this, Sharkey says smiling. "The fans will benefit from these hard times. The shows will be better. Better talent will be available and the upswing cycle will start. Bobby Heenan always said this is an indestructible business - that nothing can hurt it. I believe this 1990 year will be a challenge for all of us and the cream will rise."

I hope he's right. ***

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WWF Champion
HULK HOGAN
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"The Barber"
Beefcake
vs.
ZEUS
The Human
Wrecking Machine

"Macho Man"
Randy Savage
vs. International S

BATTLE FOR THE BELT

American
Wrestling
Association
World
Champion
Larry ZYBYSKO

A.W.A. World
Ladies Champion
Wendi RICHTER
vs. Candi
DIVINE

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MARLIN STREET FIGHT
RANDY "MACHO MAN" SAVAGE
vs.
BAD NEWS BROWN

HERCULES & RICKSON HOGAN
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BARON VON RASCHKE
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LADIES' TITLE MATCH
WENDI RICHTER vs. **JUDY MARTIN**

TAG-TEAM FUTURE
THE DESTRUCTION vs. **DIAMOND**
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"MANY VALIANT"

St. Paul Civic Center
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"MACHO MAN" Randy Savage
Tag Team

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Tournament and be
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Intercontinental
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**RAVISHING
RICK
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DEMOLITION
vs.
TWIN TOWERS

PLUS—
Brutus "The Barber" Beefcake vs. Bad News Bro
Tito Santana vs. Rick Martel, Red Rooster vs. Brooklyn Br
Jim vs. Honky Tonk Man, Blue Blazer vs. Greg "The Ham
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